

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 21 – The Dead Zone

St. George, Utah proved to be a perfect choice for them to locate propane. St. George had 4 propane dealers: AmeriGas, Coast Gas, Southern Utah Propane and Warren Energy Group, Inc. That was easy, they bought what they had the capacity to carry and headed back to the ranch. Just north of Flagstaff, Mike called Ginger.

“What’s it like up in Utah?” Ginger asked.

“We got lucky, Ginger,” Mike laughed. “St. George had 4 propane dealers and we were able to buy 15,000-gallons of propane.”

“Where are you?” Ginger asked.

“Just a little north of Flagstaff, we’ll be home in an hour,” Mike explained.

“Did you have any trouble?” she asked.

“No, we’re fine,” Mike said. “We can talk when we get home.”

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An hour later the convoy pulled into the ranch and they put off transferring the propane until the morning. Everyone gathered wanting to know what they’d found in Utah.

“You’ll have to understand that St. George is further west and a bit north so it’s not much different there than it is here,” Jack explained. “It’s a small community that’s not much more than a stop on the way from Vegas to Salt Lake City. They went further north into the Dead Zone and had all of their propane tanks topped off. They gave us \$1,000 an ounce for our gold and charged us \$4.00 a gallon for the propane.”

“How much propane?” Shelia asked.

“They topped it off, 15,000-gallons,” Mike replied. “It cost us 60 ounces of gold.”

“What next?” Ginger asked.

“We’re going back tomorrow and refill the propane tanker, Ginger. We’ll need another 36 gold pieces,” Mike answered. “Once we get all topped off, we’ll have 65,000-gallons of propane, including what we have stored in the tankers. However, they told us that they wouldn’t be able to sell us anymore propane, so we’re going to have to come up with some conservation measures.”

“How do you propose to do that?” Shelia asked.

“We’re going to need a lot more deep cycle batteries,” Jack answered. “If we get enough, we can cut the generator usage to a fourth of what we currently running. The problem is finding the batteries and the cable.”

“I think we can find deep cycle batteries at the Phoenix golf courses,” Mike suggested, “But what about the cables?”

“What you guys are saying is that you didn’t really get into the Dead Zone, is that right?” Shelia asked.

“Right, Shelia, like I told Ginger, there was nothing to worry about,” Mike replied.

The following morning they topped off their propane tanks and headed back north in the Hummer and the 9,000-gallon tanker. 36 pieces of gold later they were headed south. They arrived back at the ranch before dark and parked the propane tanker. Then they made plans to go to Phoenix the following day. They figured that there had to be several thousand golf carts in Phoenix and surely they could come up with a few hundred batteries.

Actually the cable was easier to find than the batteries. They went to several auto parts stores and bought up all of the 25’ spools of bulk battery cable and connectors they could find. Next, they went to a battery warehouse and bought up a pickup and trailer load of deep cycle batteries. The batteries were so heavy that they ended up renting 3 U-Haul trucks and loading them to their weight capacity with additional batteries. The U-Haul trucks were gasoline powered and gas was \$7 per gallon. After they unloaded the batteries and cable, they emptied the 300-gallon fuel trailer and refilled it with gas. The following morning they filled the tanks on the 3 U-Haul trucks and returned them to Phoenix where they topped them off with their own gas.

Next, they went to a Costco and filled the back of the pickup with bags of flour, beans and rice. It cost them \$1 per pound for the flour and they were limited to 100#’s. However, Phoenix had 11 Costco stores and several Sam’s Clubs. When they pulled back in at the ranch, the pickup was on its springs, but they could finally bake bread.

“You’ve got flour!” Ginger said excitedly.

“\$1 a pound with a 100# limit,” Mike laughed. “We must have hit all 11 Costco stores and all of the Sam’s Clubs. We did get some yeast so can we have some bread tomorrow?”

“What else did you get?” Ginger asked.

“Beans and rice, what else?” Mike laughed.

“What’s it like in Phoenix?” Ginger asked.

"It looks like 1900," Mike replied. "Everyone is wearing a gun openly and you have to show your Arizona Driver's License to be admitted to the city."

"What about all of the Snow Birds?" Ginger asked.

"As near as we could tell, if they could prove they had property in the greater Phoenix area they let them in," Mike replied. "Apparently, they turned everyone else away."

"But they let you in?" Ginger asked.

"Only to go shopping for the batteries, cables and some food," Mike answered. "We picked up 4 diesel fueled generators to recharge the batteries. That should cut down on our propane usage."

"Did you get any news?" she asked.

"Not much, they don't seem to know any more in Phoenix than we know up here," Mike responded.

The generators were 12.5 kw diesel fueled generators that used about 1 1/3-gallon of fuel an hour at maximum load. They have almost 120,000-gallons of stabilized diesel fuel and the generator would wear out long before they ran out of fuel. Maybe that's why they bought 4, all the fella had. They were burning through their gold, but what the hell, they couldn't eat it.

"I'm surprised we haven't had visitors," Jack said. "There must be a lot of those MZB's out there."

"We're off the beaten path," Mike replied. "But they'll find us sooner or later."

"Hello the house," a call came from the gate. Jack and Mike got their rifles and headed to the gate to see who was there. It was Jim with his family in tow.

"Hi, fellas, do you have room in this housing tract for a tired old contractor?" Jim asked.

"Where have you been?" Mike asked. "We expected to see you a long time ago."

"We had a pretty nice house in Flagstaff and we'd still be there if they weren't getting short on food," Jim replied.

"Well come on in and make introductions," Jack said. "We don't have any housing left, but we built an Adobe for John and Char."

"Mike and Jack," Jim said, "This is my wife Mary and these are our daughters Mandy and Patty."

“What’s on the truck?” Jack asked.

“I brought our possessions, Jack,” Jim explained. “What’s your food situation; we’re not imposing are we?”

“Actually we’re in pretty good shape, food wise,” Mike replied. “We’re also in pretty good shape as far as power and fuel goes. John will be relieved to have some help doing buildings.”

“I brought my tools but I don’t have any building materials,” Jim responded.

“We’ve managed so far to come up with what we need,” Jack pointed out. “The advantage to the Adobe is that the building materials are mostly free. The lumberyard in Sedona was abandoned so we can get whatever materials we need to finish off a home.”

“What crops do you have planted?” Jim asked.

“We got the seed too late last year to plant, but this year we have wheat, corn, alfalfa and vegetables,” Jack replied. “We made a trip up to St. George and refilled our stock of propane. Then, we made a trip to Phoenix where we loaded up on batteries, cables, RV diesel generators and some food. The only thing we’re really short of is enough people to defend this ranch.”

“I don’t know how much help I’ll be in that department,” Jim replied. “All we have is a .22 rifle, a 12-gauge shotgun and a model 70 Winchester rifle in 30-06.”

“We have more guns than we have people,” Mike pointed out. “How old are the girls?”

“16 and 17,” Jim replied. “Why, if I might ask?”

“John has 2 boys, John Jr. and Bob,” Jack explained. “Tom and Juan both got married and the only thing keeping John’s boys from doing the same is the lack of young ladies.”

“Really?” Jim chuckled. “Did you hear that girls, there are boys your age available.”

“Cool...”

John and Bob thought so too, but Jim was concerned. The girls were his babies and he was like any father. However, John’s boys seemed to be pretty well behaved and over the course of the summer, Jim built 3 Adobes using chopped up hay instead of straw. They got the building/electrical/plumbing materials Jim needed from Sedona and they moved into the first home that was completed. Since Mike was usually wearing the Vaqueros he gave his Colt King Cobra to Jim to carry. And while they were in Sedona, they went through the empty stores and picked up all of the guns, ammo and clothing available.

By late fall the boys and girls were an item and Jim reluctantly gave them permission to marry. They went into Sedona and found the last preacher in town and got him to perform the ceremony. John Jr. married Mandy and Bob married Patty. It turned out to be the last of the official wedding ceremonies. Official because there wasn't anyone to issue a license. However, the preacher gave them a certificate of marriage and it was just going to have to make do. The preacher said that he and his family were moving to Tucson where they needed a new preacher. Apparently before fall or during the winter the remaining residents of Sedona bugged out, too. The ranchers never knew when, they couldn't get to town.

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"We may have to fire up a second generator to keep the batteries charged," John suggested. "I've been checking them periodically and we seem to be using the charge faster than it's going in."

"It might help if we cleared off the snow," Jack suggested. "Fire up as many generators as it takes, John. We're running 8 homes off those batteries."

"I wonder what is going on in the world." John commented.

"That's anybody's guess isn't it," Mike replied. "Probably nothing good."

"We need to go get more firewood for the cast iron stoves and the fireplaces," Jim pointed out. "The snow came on a lot earlier than I thought it would. There is plenty of timber up by Flagstaff, but I'm not sure how to get there with as much snow as we have."

"There plenty of timber between here and Sedona," John pointed out. "We have a tractor so we can drag the logs back here. The problem is I don't have a chainsaw."

"I have 2 new chainsaws still in their boxes and several cases of oil," Jim replied. "All that I'm missing is the gasoline for the chainsaws."

"Did I tell you what kind of preparedness nuts our wives have become?" Mike asked. "Ginger and Shelia put in a 5,000-gallon tank of gasoline and I think we've only used a little bit of that gas."

"Anyone ever use a chainsaw?" Jack asked. "I haven't."

"Do they have instructions?" Mike asked.

"Whatever is in the boxes," Jim replied.

“We’re set, then,” Mike said. “We can get Tom, Juan, John and Bob to go out the east gate and harvest some timber between here and Sedona.”

“Why not the gate by the road?” Jim asked.

“We don’t want to attract attention, Jim,” Jack explained. “It’s been 2 years since the eruption and we’ve been very successfully avoiding people. There can’t be more than a dozen people in the area that even know we’re here. As a matter of fact, your construction crew and Ralph are the only people who know where we are.”

“Ralph died,” Jim said. “So it would only be my construction crews. Most of those guys were illegals so it is anyone’s guess where they are.”

Was it a good idea having illegal aliens knowing where the ranch was located? They’d helped construct the shelters and could reasonably assume that the shelters were stocked, right? That’s right, except for one small fact. It wasn’t exactly too healthy to be an illegal Mexican in Arizona these days. Not with the Minuteman Project running around with the weapons from MS-13. Anyone who was an illegal alien had either become a responsible member of the Arizona society or had gone back to México with the Mexican Army. Which was not to say that there weren’t any MZB’s around, just that they weren’t part of any of Jim’s construction crews. They would probably show up later or sooner.

One other thing that should be pointed out; the thumpers fired 40mm grenades and grenades wouldn’t do the fence much good. Consequently, they would have to avoid using the M406 rounds, except as a last ditch measure, and only use the M576 and M1060 rounds. Most of the rounds that Jack had were the M406 rounds. The M576 rounds had a maximum effective range of 100-meters. The M1060 rounds were thermobaric, e.g., fuel air explosives.

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It took them until Thanksgiving to have enough firewood harvested to call it a winter. They all got together at Jack and Shelia’s and had a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner. The only thing missing was the turkey, the Macy’s parade and news of the outside world. Mike hoped that they were halfway through with the bad winters. Unfortunately, that wasn’t to be. Nature was doing its best to find a balance. The gas emissions from Yellowstone blowing up had greatly enlarged the ozone hole in the atmosphere. Conversely, there weren’t many motor vehicles running and many industries had shut down, possibly permanently. Two years of acid rain had done a good job of clearing the atmosphere. The entire Northern Hemisphere had returned to the dark ages. In the Southern Hemisphere, temperature was up as much as they were down up north. Scientists might have predictive climate models, but where were the scientists? None of the scenarios Mike had seen on the Internet back when he was researching volcanoes seemed to be holding true.

The eruption was smaller than previously forecast; consequently the area affected was smaller. Mike had even seen the Abrupt Climate Change Scenario in the Internet, but it didn't seem to really fit either. He dutifully recorded each day's high and lows from his weather station on his computer and hoped to see some sort of a change in the trend soon. This winter was colder than the previous, so they hadn't turned a corner.

What was going on in the world was that people had pretty much exhausted the supply of food. Responsible people had taken to growing gardens and did the best that they could to get by. The people in México were better off than their neighbors to the north, so they stayed home. The Canadians were caught between the rock and the hard place. Their winters were several times worse, but if they went south, they'd run into the Dead Zone. There wasn't any life inside of the circle where the pyroclastic flow had gone. But the further you got away from the epicenter, Yellowstone, the better things got. Beyond 1,100km, there wasn't any sign of ash.

In March of 2010, Mike could see that it was beginning to warm. When he incorporated the new data into his graph, he could see a warming trend over the previous year. It wasn't much, only 1°-2°F, but it was something.

"I can't really say, Jack, but it might be warming up," Mike reported.

"Good, we need to get on the range," Jack replied. "If the weather is better we stand a better chance of seeing trouble. I fully expect that this year or next we're going to see MZB's coming out of the Dead Zone."

"I suppose that everyone except the children should get on the range," Mike agreed.

"It couldn't hurt, we aren't getting any younger and every year my aim seems to get a little worse," Jack laughed.

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"Ginger, how about getting your guns and going to the range?" Mike asked. "Jack went to get Shelia."

"How is the ammo holding out?" Ginger asked.

"About as well as can be expected," Mike answered. "We've reloaded everything that's reloadable."

"What isn't reloadable?" Ginger asked.

"The Berdan primed ammo," Mike replied.

"Daddy reloaded Berdan primed ammo," she replied. "He had some sort of special dep-priming tool."

“Maybe we need to go to Phoenix and see if we can pick one up,” Mike acknowledged.

“Either that or buy a lot more ammo,” she replied.

“Maybe Jack and I will go to Phoenix, like I said.”

“Can Shelia and I go with you?” Ginger asked. “Maybe we could have dinner at McCormick & Schmick’s.”

“We can if they’re still open,” Mike agreed. “Get your guns and let’s get going.”

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“Not bad, ladies,” Jack said. “The two of you are shooting better than the two of us.”

“Ginger wants to go to Phoenix,” Mike announced.

“What’s in Phoenix?” Jack asked.

“She says that her father used to reload Berdan primed ammo and that all we need is a proper depriming tool,” Mike replied. “Plus when I suggested that you and I run down there, she said the Shelia and she could come along and go to McCormick & Schmick’s.”

“Are they still open?” Jack asked.

“Hell, I don’t know, but we could spend the night if they are,” Mike answered.

“What if we can’t find a Berdan depriming tool?” Jack asked.

“Then we’ll just buy all of the ammo we can get,” Ginger replied.

“Sounds good to me,” Jack replied, “Shelia, are you up for a trip to Phoenix?”

“It would be better if we go now than when it warms up,” Shelia answered.

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Monday, March 15, 2010, Phoenix, AZ...

“Can I help you?” the dealer asked.

“Do you sell depriming tools for Berdan primed ammo?” Mike asked.

"I do, but are you sure that you want to go to the effort?" the dealer asked. "What caliber of ammo do you want to reload?"

"7.62×51mm and 30-06 for the Garand," Mike replied.

"I have once fired, boxer primed cases and new boxer primed ammo in both calibers," he replied. "You'll thank me before it's all over if you try to reload the Berdan primed brass."

"What kind of quantities are we talking here?" Jack asked.

"How much do you need?" the dealer asked.

"How much do you have?" Jack laughed.

"I can let you have 20 cases of 7.62×51mm, boxer primed, new ammo and 10 cases of the boxer primed Garand ammo in the 8 round clips," he said.

"Is that all?" Jack asked.

"I could double it if you could pay in gold," the dealer replied.

"What about 5.56×45mm?" Mike asked.

"Same deal as the 7.62," the dealer replied.

"Shelia, do your stuff," Jack smirked.

"We have gold and want double," Shelia said.

"Lady, that's 100 cases of ammo," the dealer pointed out.

"It's ok, we shoot a lot," she replied.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"Powder, primer and bullets to reload all of the ammo," Jack said.

"I'll get you loaded and then I'm shutting up shop for the rest of the day," the dealer laughed.

"Is McCormick & Schmick's still open?" Ginger asked.

"Yes, but they've gotten expensive," the man answered. "That will be 20 ounces of gold for the ammo and 5 ounces for the reloading components."

"I'll pay the 13, you can pay the 12 and buy dinner and pay for the motel," Sheila said to Ginger.

"You folks have a lot of gold, do you?" the dealer asked.

"We had 13 Eagles apiece," Ginger answered. "I guess that means we're broke."

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"Now that we're set for the next war or two, how about that dinner?" Mike asked.

"You shined that dealer on, Ginger," Jack said.

"He didn't need to know how much gold we have," she replied.

"Sorry mister, but you'll have to check your revolvers," the maitre d' said.

"Sure," Mike replied handing over the Rugers.

Ginger and Shelia had their guns in their purses and Jack had his nestled in the middle of his back. Mike also had his Glock 23 nestled in his back. With the weight of the guns Mike was carrying, he was almost relieved to give up the Ruger revolvers. He didn't really like the gun nestled there, but they knew about checking their guns and he'd been elected the sacrificial lamb. Had they not checked any guns, the purses would have been searched and the men patted down. This was a whole lot easier. Arizona law provided that no person shall, unless specifically authorized by law, enter a public establishment or attend a public event carrying a firearm after a reasonable request by the operator of the establishment or the sponsor of the event to remove his firearm and place it in the custody of the operator or sponsor. This does not apply to shooting ranges or shooting events, hunting areas or similar locations or activities. Since all 4 of them had CCW's under Arizona's 'shall issue' statute it wasn't unlawful for them to have concealed weapons. And, only Mike had been asked to give up weapons and then only the Rugers.

"Jeez," Jack exclaimed. "Get a load of these prices."

"How much is the hamburger and fries?" Mike asked.

"\$15," Jack replied.

"How much is the lobster?" Ginger asked.

"\$35," Jack grinned. "Is there anyone who isn't going to have lobster?"

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 22 – 13 Days of Glory

The title of the chapter refers to the battle of Alamo. Loaded down with ammunition the two couples returned to the ranch the following day, Tuesday, March 16, 2010. They had 100 cases of ammo, what they thought was enough to last them a lifetime, and enough components to reload all of the ammo twice, maybe more. When they got back they tossed the Berdan primed ammo into the storeroom in Mike's basement and divided the ammo between the shelters. Checking the lot numbers on the ammo they found that by the Grace of God, all similar calibers came from the same lots.

On Wednesday, they sighted every one of the rifles in with the new ammo and noted their previous settings in their notebooks, not that they ever expected to run out of ammo. There were 3 doublewides, Jack, Mike and Tom's. There was Jose's 100-year-old Adobe and the new Adobes belonging to Juan, John, Jim, John and Bob, nine homes in all. They spent the next week or so putting in the fighting trenches surrounding each Adobe and Tom's new doublewide. The fighting trenches were interconnected and it was possible to move to the 3 shelters without anyone exposing themselves.

According to the temperature readings they thought they might have an early spring so they hauled the manure and tilled the fields getting ready for the coming season. Each family kept enough ammo readily available so that if trouble came they could totally avoid exposing themselves. For the newer members of the group a fair amount of time was spent practicing on the range getting used to the weapons they would carry. Tom gave Teresa his Glock 23 and went with the 5½" Vaqueros. They planted the crops and finally the garden.

Mike began to notice that the hair was standing up on his neck just like it did in Nam when they were going on a patrol that resulted in an ambush. He mentioned it to both Jack and John and both men had the same feeling. Whether it was precognition or just dumb luck, they didn't have all that long to find out what was bothering them. Shortly after all the planting was done Tom happened to notice a van passing by the road in front of the ranch. The thing that caught his attention was the speed of the van. They rarely got traffic anymore on the road. What traffic they did get was running 55 or higher. This vehicle was moving slowly, maybe 35mph at the most. He immediately let everyone know that they might have trouble brewing.

Everyone reacted immediately and they got their web gear, weapons and a double load out of ammo. Then they took positions in the trenches and waited to see what would happen. Less than an hour later the housing area began taking suppressing fire. They were perfectly safe in the trenches so they waited for the attackers to show themselves. You may recall that the effective range of the canister rounds for the M-79 was 100-yards. When John realized that the thumper was useless at the distance between the fighting positions and the front fence, he set it aside in favor of his Garand. Jose had spun yarns about the Alamo and apparently the Méxicans waited about 13 days before making a full charge with all of their forces.

They endured 2 days of the sniping and never picked up so much as a scratch. They had Teresa and Selena fixing meals and Mandy and Patty passing out the food and coffee. Lacking any response from the residents, the MZB's finally cut through the fence on the night of the second day. Jack, Mike and Tom had the night vision scopes on their rifles and they easily picked off the people moving through the fence. The morning of the third day, the attackers had had enough and blew large holes in the front fence and charged through. Imagine their surprise when a dozen or so M16's and the thumpers opened up. If one grips an M16 by the fore stock and the pistol grip pushing out in opposing directions, it is possible to control the rifle even using the 3 round burst setting.

After a brief firefight that lasted less than 10 minutes the attackers withdrew. They came again after dark only to run into the directed fire from the Super Match 7.62's and the two .50BMG rifles. None of the attackers was wearing night vision equipment so far as Mike, Jack and the others could see. It was hard to tell using those UNS and MUNS. The following day the attackers made no attempt to attack the ranch. A brief conversation occurred among the defenders and it was decided that they could relax their guard, ever so slightly. They took turns grabbing a few hours of shuteye but they always kept a minimum of 3 people fully awake. On the morning of the sixth day, the attackers used more hand grenades and blew even more holes in the fence and came charging in after.

It actually got so bad during that firefight that the defenders were reduced to using handguns and the M-79's to ward off the attackers. They held, but at least 4 of the defenders were wounded badly enough to require attention from Ginger. Juan, Mike, John Jr. and Tom received painful, although not life threatening wounds. The attackers once again retreated. Tradition holds that on the morning of March 6, 1836, General Santa Anna ordered his band to play a song called *El Degüello* during the assault on the Alamo. The song supposedly meant "throat cutting" and was played in situations where no quarter was to be given to the enemy. According to author Walter Lord, the song was "a hymn of hate and merciless death, played to spur the Mexican troops forward in their final assault on the Alamo." Whether it was true or not, the song was played over and over.

The bad guys returned to the suppressing fire even though it was ineffective. This continued for several days and all the while the music was playing in the background. They played the song in one of John Wayne's movies, Rio Lobo, Rio Bravo or El Dorado, they couldn't really remember (the answer is Rio Bravo). It worked a whole lot better in person than it did in the movies, mainly because it disturbed their rest.

The final attack came at night on the 13th day. The ranchers had taken time to get some sleep in the shelters beyond the sound of the music and they were ready. And during this final attack no one got rattled. Two of the thumpers began to pour out the canister rounds when the attacker came within 75'. All 5 night scoped rifles were laying down fire and the remaining defenders were in panic mode firing the M16's in 3 round bursts. And then it ended. Mike, Jack and the others slid down the walls of the trenches and sat there totally exhausted. It wasn't the battle of the Alamo, although it lasted as

long. Santa Anna attacked three times but it seemed as if the MBZ's had attacked more. Somewhere along the way, the defenders lost count.

"We've got to collect the bodies," Mike told Jack.

"They aren't going anyway, rest," Jack replied.

"I hear people moaning," Mike insisted.

"Juan, grab a pistol and let's shut them up," Tom directed.

"Man, I thought I was going to have a heart attack when I saw how many there were that last time," Jack added. "The only thing that saved our asses was those thumpers."

"And the night vision scopes," Mike countered.

"Those too," Jack agreed.

"They sure ruined that fence."

"True, but it did what it was supposed to, slow them down," Jack said.

"How many do you think there were?" Mike asked.

"We can count 'em when we bury them," Jack suggested. "I don't know about you, but I'm going to take a long hot shower and get some sleep."

"I'll put Tom in charge of security and do the same," Mike groaned. "We are too old for this crap. We aren't 20 years old anymore."

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"Good morning," Jack said cheerfully.

"You're half right," Mike mumbled. "What's going on?"

"John is using his backhoe to dig a pit to bury the bodies," Jack explained. "The boys tossed all of the bodies and collected anything of value. Their favorite weapons seemed to be the AK's but they had some of everything."

"Nobody on our side got killed?" Mike asked.

"We picked up more wounds last night but nothing fatal," Jack said. "Whoever they were, they'd been looting for a very long time. You should see the things the boys collected from their cars."

“You seem to be bursting with energy,” Mike observed.

“Ginger gave amphetamines to anyone who wanted them,” Jack explained. “The bottle is on the counter.”

“This coffee isn’t cutting it, I guess I’d better take one too,” Mike responded.

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“We buried 213 bodies, Dad,” Tom reported.

“That many?” Mike responded in surprise. “How did two squads hold off six platoons?”

“Our cause was righteous?” Jack laughed.

“I think that we were just more desperate than they were,” Mike retorted sharply. “Did anyone inventory the ammo, yet?”

“We’ll be reloading for a month,” Jack answered.

“What about the 40mm grenades?” Mike asked.

“We don’t have many left,” Tom answered.

“Jack can you get more?”

“Not where I got those, no,” he replied. “We sorted through the weapons and kept anything we could use. Some of us were talking about taking the rest down to that dealer in Phoenix and seeing if he might buy them. I think these guys might have come through St. George.”

“What makes you say that?” Mike asked.

“The gold Eagles,” Jack grimaced. “I could be wrong, but they had 96 still in the plastic envelopes like we gave those folks in St. George.”

“Jeez, do you think we should go up there and see if they’re ok?” Mike asked.

“After we go to Phoenix, maybe we should consider it,” Jack suggested. “Tom and the others pulled the cars up north a couple miles and put in the roadblock like you suggested. I think we should load the weapons aboard a pickup and take the pickup and trailer down to Phoenix first.”

“We’ll take our wives and give them a night out on the town,” Mike suggested. “Are we going to reload our ammo?”

“That dealer sold reloaded ammo so maybe we should just sell him the brass and buy new,” Jack answered.

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“If it isn’t my favorite customers,” the dealer grinned. “Shoot up all of that ammo?”

“We put one hell of a dent in it,” Jack replied. “Would you be in the market for some used guns?”

“I might, what do you have?”

“AK’s, hunting rifles, you name it,” Jack answered.

“I’m not a class III dealer,” the dealer said.

“We won’t tell anyone,” Mike winked.

“How many weapons do you have?” the dealer asked.

“A pickup load,” Jack replied. Plus we brought down all of the brass we collected. I assume you buy brass?”

“We can work something out,” the dealer suggested.

“We didn’t get your name the last time we were in,” Mike pointed out.

“Fellas if I’m buying automatic weapons, let’s just leave it that way,” the dealer grinned. “Pull your pick up around to the back entrance and we’ll unload what you have.”

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“There you go,” Jack said. “The brass is sorted according to caliber. All of ours is the boxer-primed stuff we bought from you the last time we were in. “We just tossed all of the bad guys’ brass into a few separate boxes.”

“Did you count it?”

“Nope. Can you weigh it?” Mike asked.

“Yeah, that will get me close. I’m going to need a couple of days to put a value on those weapons.”

“I don’t suppose you know where we could get any 40mm grenades for M-79’s do you?” Jack asked.

"I might," the dealer replied. "I think they'd run you about \$20 apiece."

"We'd be in the market for whatever style and however many you could find," Jack said. "We'll take them against the rifles. Plus we're going to want more ammo."

"Do you want smoke and flares?"

"HE, HEDP, and canister," Jack replied.

"Where are you staying?" the dealer asked. "I'll let you know when I have an answer for you."

"We'll be back," Mike suggested. "I like this no name basis of doing business."

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"You have an \$8,000 credit, what can I sell you?" the dealer asked.

"Let's start with the 40mm grenades," Jack said.

"All I could get you was the M406's," the dealer replied. "I have 120 at \$25 apiece."

"We'll take the remainder in 5.56, 30-06 Garand, 7.62x51mm, .45 Colt, .357 Magnum and .40S&W," Mike replied. "Unless you have any of the Federal tactical 12-gauge ammo."

"How much of each?" the dealer asked.

"10 cases each of the rifle ammo and 2,500 rounds of each pistol caliber," Jack suggested.

"What about the tactical?"

"2,500 each in slugs and 00," Mike replied.

o

"You owe me five Eagles," the dealer said when he finished loading.

"Let's hit Costco and head home," Mike suggested.

Ginger and Shelia did the shopping, filling in where the ranch was missing food items. It was late afternoon by the time they left Phoenix and after dark when they arrived back at the ranch.

"Do you want to go to St. George tomorrow?" Jack asked.

“Not really, but I suppose that we have to,” Mike responded. “We’ll take the 2 3,000-gallon tankers, just in case. I think that we’re going to need more people, what would you say to the wives going along? There might be wounded people and Ginger could help out.”

o

“Help you folks?” the man at the barricade asked.

“We’re from Sedona and we came up to see if we could help out,” Mike replied.

“How did you know in Sedona that we had trouble?” the man asked.

“Because they attacked our place after they attacked you,” Jack snapped. “Anyway, we figured that we’d better come up here and see if we could help out. Mike’s wife is a Paramedic.”

“Come on into town and you can talk to the Mayor,” the man suggested.

o

“So, that’s when we recognized the gold we used to purchase the propane and figured that they’d hit St. George,” Jack explained to the Mayor.

“It’s mighty neighborly of you to be concerned, but we have everything well in hand,” the Mayor replied. “About 500 of them came storming down I-15 and they hit the propane place first and killed those people. We responded and managed to drive them off after losing about 100 more or less of our people. We killed around 300 of them but we didn’t bother to count the bodies.”

“213 of them hit us,” Jack explained. “They just kept coming. It lasted 13 days.”

“How do you know how many there were?” the Mayor asked. “Did you kill them all?”

“Over a 2-week period, yes,” Mike replied.

“You fellas had better rearm,” the Mayor suggested. “We think that there are more of them coming. I noticed the propane trucks, are you looking for propane?”

“We didn’t know what to expect and we brought the trucks just in case,” Jack answered. “But, if you have propane you can sell, we could use 6,000-gallons.”

“I guess we could make an exception and sell you more propane,” the Mayor replied. “It’s still 1 ounce of gold for 250-gallons. Pay the man who fills your tankers.”

“If you’re sure there nothing we can do, then we’ll get the propane and head back home,” Mike said.

“It’s nice to know that someone else cares about St. George,” the Mayor replied. “Have a safe trip home.”

o

“How about we send John and Jose and their wives back to the ranch and take a detour on the way home?” Jack suggested.

“What did you have in mind, Jack?” Mike asked.

“The Marine Corps Depot at Barstow,” Jack smiled.

“It might be occupied,” Mike responded.

“It might not,” Jack countered.

Six hours later, they were in Barstow. The Marine Corps Depot was deserted. It was late and they were tired so they tried to get some sleep in the Hummer. It was a fitful sleep for Mike; he was still fighting the MZB’s that had attacked the ranch. When the sun came up, he gave up and went to see if they could get into the Depot. He found a door he could jimmy and he was into the office area. He went looking for the records of what the Depot had to offer. The first thing he found was a memo indicating that the Depot had been shut down in 2009 and that the inventory was being moved to San Diego. The next thing he found was a computer printout of the material that hadn’t been moved.

“Jack, wake up, we hit the jackpot,” Mike yelled.

“Huh?”

“They’re in the process of moving the Depot to San Diego,” Mike explained. “They started out by moving the newer ordinance first and left behind some of the older stuff.”

“I need some coffee,” Jack replied.

“We can’t get many weapons, but there a lot of ammo,” Mike continued.

“I’ll set up a camp stove and make some coffee,” Shelia offered.

“Let me see that printout,” Jack asked.

The printout showed some Ma Deuces still new in the crates after 60 years. There were all kinds of .50 cal ammo and 7.62x51mm match ammo. There were also some of the

LAW rockets. Finally there were the canister rounds for the MK-19's. The new Ma Deuces were marked OBS, probably indicating obsolete. There were also some of the older generation night vision binoculars. It took them all morning and part of the afternoon to load 3 5-ton trucks they found. They didn't find any Claymores but they found several cases of the now outlawed Bouncing Betty's. Around 3pm they left for Sedona.

"Where did you guys go?" Tom asked when they arrived at the barricade between Sedona and the ranch.

"We went to the Marine Corps Depot in Barstow," Mike answered. "Move those cars and let us through. We have all kinds of nice presents you might get a kick out of."

o

"You made out at Barstow?" John asked.

"You are going to think you're back in Nam," Jack replied.

"What did you get?" John asked.

"Ma Deuces, .50 cal ammo, Bouncing Betty's, canister rounds for the thumpers and LAW rockets," Jack explained. "Plus some of the old night vision equipment."

"I'd have rather had a couple of 105mm howitzers and some beehive rounds," John laughed. "But this will do."

"Did they get back ok with the propane?" Mike asked.

"Pulled in just before dark last night," John answered. "We went to town, got used fencing and patched the front fence."

"I noticed," Mike said. "Everything ok here?"

"The crops are doing fine and we haven't had any more trouble," John replied.

"Tom would you and the others unload the truck?" Mike asked. "Leave those cases with the Ma Deuces sitting out and we'll set them up in the morning."

"Are we expecting more trouble?" John asked.

"The Mayor in St. George seemed to think so," Jack answered.

o

Trouble would be a while in coming, but they didn't know that. The following morning they set up the Ma Deuces and planted the Bouncing Betty's inside of the fence. They

strung pig wire to keep the kids out of the minefield and life more or less returned to normal, whatever normal was. There are 2 ways to plant the mines, with the pressure pad or by using a trip wire. They did both and never went back to the minefield. The trip wire setup is only useful where you have something to hide the wire and they had a little grass so it was perfect.

Mike's records of the high and low temperatures seemed to confirm that the weather was warming slightly. The ranchers had a few extra days of growing season and managed to get a 3rd cutting of the alfalfa for the livestock. It appeared that they were getting too many steers and John suggested that they take the extra animals down to Phoenix and sell them off. Some of the livestock was over market weight so they butchered those and took a dozen market weight cattle to Phoenix. Beef was going for \$250 per hundredweight, \$2.50 per pound. They got \$37,650 (in gold and silver) for the dozen cattle. No wonder a hamburger and fries cost \$15! They stopped by their favorite gun dealer and picked up extra magazines for their FAL, M1A and M16 rifles. They also stopped by Costco and bought what was available.

"I wonder who is running the government." Mike asked.

"What I'm wondering is why there aren't any radio stations back on the air," Jack countered. "They have electricity in Phoenix, but I haven't heard a single radio station."

"The reason that there aren't any radio stations on the air is that the government won't allow it," Sheila explained.

"One would have thought that that would be the first thing the government did was get them back on the air, Shelia," Jack admonished.

"Maybe, but the two of you have been so occupied lately that I didn't bother mentioning what's happening," she explained. "They didn't have elections in 2008 and Bush is still the head of the government, according to ham radio. But if you ask me, there's something funny about him still being in power. According to what I'm hearing, he doesn't appear to be in charge of domestic problems, only the foreign stuff."

"Then who is running to government?" Mike asked.

"The way I heard it, the military," Shelia replied.

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 23 – A Successful Operation

With the number of cattle cut down and the freezers full, they were set for the winter other than harvesting firewood. The young men went to the timber north of the ranch and felled several trees, after which they began harvesting the deadfalls. It didn't snow until the first week of October, further confirming that the seasons were returning to normal. It was, however, still very cold, just not as cold as the previous year. When they had enough firewood to see them through the winter and then some, they stopped. That was the week of Thanksgiving. Jim had patched the holes in the homes and the Adobes.

Mike and Jack spent a lot of time listening to the radios trying to learn more about what Shelia had told them about the military being in charge of the country. The ham bands were flooded with rumors but in the end they didn't learn anything more than Shelia had told them. John was suggesting that with the size of their horse herd and the shortage of fuel, they might do very well selling off some of their extra horses in Phoenix. Jack and Mike told John that when they had 3 mounts for every rider they might consider it but until then, they'd keep their horses.

o

Thanksgiving...

"We should think about putting in a community building," Jim suggested. "We could use it for gatherings like today."

"There isn't enough lumber in the yard up in Sedona to build a very big building," Jack pointed out.

"Jack $\frac{2}{3}$ of the buildings we have are built out of adobe, so why couldn't we use that?" Jim asked.

"Do you really think it's feasible?" Mike asked. "Where would we put the building?"

"There's room between Tom's house and the south fence," Jim replied. "We'd only have to put windows on the east and west sides to catch the light."

"That's on your land Mike, so it's up to you," Jack said.

"There's more than enough wheat straw, so go ahead Jim," Mike finally replied. "This rural location has turned into a small town anyway."

"Mike, it could serve several purposes including being our school," Jack said.

"I said go ahead," Mike snapped.

“What’s the matter Mike?” Jack asked, “You don’t seem to be yourself.”

“My back is bothering me again, Jack, sorry,” Mike explained.

“What about your back?” Ginger asked.

“It hurts in my lower back, honey,” Mike answered.

“Are you wearing your brace?” ginger asked.

“I never leave home without it, Ginger.”

“How are your feet?” Ginger asked.

“What do my feet have to do with my back?” Mike asked.

“Just answer my question, Mike,” Ginger persisted.

“My right foot has a tingling sensation,” Mike replied.

“Dr. Russell said to keep an eye on you in case you developed symptoms related to your back,” Ginger explained. “That tingling in your foot could be the onset of diabetic neuropathy or another pinch on your spinal column like you had last time. It’s called spinal stenosis.”

“How can you tell?” Mike asked.

“I can test your blood sugar for a few days and see if it’s elevated,” she replied. “If it’s not, I think we’d better get back to Phoenix and see Dr. Russell.”

“What is spinal stenosis?” Jim asked.

“Jim, Spinal stenosis is narrowing of the spinal canal that occurs when excessive growth of bone and/or tissue reduces the size of the openings in the spinal bones. This narrowing can squeeze and irritate the nerve roots that branch out from the spinal cord, or it can squeeze and irritate the spinal cord itself. This may cause pain, numbness, or weakness, most often in the legs, feet, and buttocks. Severe disability is not common,” Ginger replied.

“How do they treat it?” Jim asked.

“Treatment includes pain-relieving medication, exercises, and other non-surgical measures, and in some cases, surgical treatment,” Ginger replied. “That’s what Mike had done the last time. In general, 75% of people are satisfied with the results of surgery for spinal stenosis. For people with severe symptoms, surgery usually reduces leg pain and improves walking ability. However, symptoms may return after several years.

The main type of surgery for lumbar spinal stenosis is decompressive laminectomy, which relieves pressure on the spinal cord or the spinal nerve roots. Laminectomy removes part of the vertebra (bone and/or fibrous tissue) to create space for nerves. In some cases, like in Mike's, spinal fusion will be done at the same time to stabilize the spine. Stabilizing the spine may improve function and relieve Mike's pain."

"I don't envy you that surgery," Jim said. "What was the other thing you mentioned, Ginger?"

"Diabetic neuropathy is a nerve disorder commonly caused by diabetes, Jim," she replied. "Over time, high blood sugar levels from diabetes can damage nerves throughout your body. There are several types of diabetic neuropathy:

"Peripheral neuropathy results from damage to the peripheral nervous system. It reduces your ability to sense pain, touch, temperature, and vibration in certain parts of the body and may sometimes affect movement and muscle strength. It most often affects the feet and lower legs and may contribute to serious foot problems, such as ulcers, infection, and bone and joint deformities. It is the most common form of diabetic neuropathy.

"Autonomic neuropathy is caused by problems with the autonomic nervous system. These nerves control the involuntary functions of your body, such as heartbeat, blood pressure, sweating, digestion, urination, and some aspects of sexual function. This is also a common form of diabetic neuropathy.

"Focal neuropathy affects a single nerve, most often in the wrist, thigh, or foot. It may also affect the nerves of the back and chest and those that control the eye muscles. It is often associated with conditions that compress or pinch the nerves such as carpal tunnel syndrome. However, carpal tunnel syndrome also frequently occurs in people who have diabetes but do not have focal neuropathy. Focal neuropathy usually develops suddenly and is the most rare form of diabetic neuropathy."

"I don't know if you're done, but you can stop, Ginger," Jim said. "It sounds to me like either way Mike goes he screwed."

"The spinal stenosis can be fixed, Jim. The diabetic neuropathy is irreversible," she replied.

◦

"Your blood sugar is pretty normal, honey, but I can't run a hemoglobin A_{1c} analysis," Ginger said.

"What's that?" Mike asked.

“Tight blood sugar control means an average level of hemoglobin A_{1c} (HbA_{1c}) of less than 7% over 2 to 3 months,” she replied. “If that test comes back around 6%, your blood sugar has been normal for at least 3 months. Either way, we’re going to have to go to Phoenix.”

“As least it’s warmer in Phoenix,” Mike tried to laugh.

“Are you having trouble again Mike?” Dr. Russell asked.

“Lower back pain and tingling in my right foot,” Mike said.

“We’ll get you in the hospital and run some tests,” Russell said.

“Is this still out of your league, doc?” Mike asked.

“I’ve done it hundreds of times now,” Russell replied.

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“Well?” Ginger asked.

“Same spot as before, T-4 and T-5,” Russell said. “We’ll do the surgery tomorrow and he should be able to go home in a couple of days. I noticed a new scar, what happened?”

“We were attacked last spring by some bad guys,” Ginger said. “Altogether about half of our people got shot, but nobody got killed.”

“What about the attackers?” Russell asked.

“We killed the whole bunch, doc, 213 of them,” she replied. “Since then we picked up some heavy armaments.”

“What did you get, flamethrowers?” Russell chuckled.

“No, but that’s an idea,” Ginger replied.

Private ownership of flamethrowers is not restricted in the United States. Some collectors of military hardware claim to use them to clear the ice off their driveway in the winter. Flamethrowers are also sometimes used for igniting controlled burns of grassland or forest, although more commonly a drip torch or a flare (fusee) is used. The US military’s inventory of flamethrowers is decreasing. Flamethrowers are an ideal urban weapon, but few military planners envision a war fought in cities and towns. Contingency plans call for bypassing cities or blowing them off the face of the Earth. At the battalion level, the armorer may have one or two among his stores, but the military relies primarily on modern explosives. Only rarely do soldiers receive training on the use of flamethrowers.

Obsolete US military models that one might encounter around the world include the M2-A1-7 or the ABC-M9-7. Both were basically three-tank, four-gallon models, lit by electrically fired ignition cartridges. Both weigh about twenty-one kilos, or forty-six pounds. US training manuals often showed users deploying their dragons from behind an obstacle, while the tanks were set to the side. (Undoubtedly, this is the position preferred by survivors.) The M9-E1-7 is the only model considered to be current in the US armed forces today. Basically, this model was much like its predecessors. Filled, it weighed about forty-six pounds; maximum range with properly thickened fuel was forty-five to fifty meters. All models had three tanks, cartridge ignition, and a pack rack for soldiers. Useful life of the fuel in combat was from five to seven seconds. However, it should be pointed out that it was illegal to import incendiary devices, including flamethrowers.

Most experts agreed that either the Italians or the Brazilians, depending on one's point of view, currently manufactured the world's most advanced flamethrower. Both were capable of seventy-meter (215 feet) ranges. The LC-T1-M1 Brazilian model had three tanks and weighed thirty-five kilos fully charged. Its outstanding feature was an electronic ignition system powered by eight standard 1.5-volt dry cells. Reportedly, a fresh set of batteries would light one thousand shots before going dead. On the average, users expected five to seven seconds of actual operation before the fuel was expended. The model T-148/A Italian flamethrower also had an electronic ignition, and its manufacturer claimed it would function satisfactorily under water! This may be of value on rainy or snowy days. The Italian model's advanced tank design gives it the same basic fuel load as most other models, but with a total weight (filled) of only twenty-five and one-half kilograms—as opposed to most other models weighing in at around thirty-five kilos.

Ginger went to the library and looked up flamethrowers while Mike was recuperating. When she got back to the ranch, she had a visit with Jack and John. Before John carried a thumper, he carried a flamethrower in 'Nam. He told her that if he could find a farm store, he could build a fixed flamethrower with a range of as much as 125 meters. The only thing they lacked was something to gel the fuel mixture into napalm. John said that if they couldn't find something, he could always use motor oil, liquid soap and gasoline, in the proper ratio. John got a high-pressure pump and used a 55-gallon drum to hold the napalm mixture. They tested it and it would reach to the other side of the road. He built two more of the design he had perfected and they could cover most of the front fence area.

Ginger hadn't told Dr. Russell what they had because she didn't know where he stood on issues like automatic weapons. Not everyone who lived in Arizona was a gun freak despite the wide availability of firearms. Mike was healing up pretty well and because they'd caught the problem early, the tingling was gone from his feet and the back pain was greatly reduced. Russell told Mike that this surgery should last, but if he had any more problems to come to Phoenix. Otherwise, Ginger could remove the sutures and let him know if there were any problems. The reason the bad buys, MZB's, hadn't killed any of the people on the ranch was that stone wall in front of the trenches. When it had

been constructed and added on to, they put in gun ports rather than raising their heads above the wall.

That presented John with a problem when he constructed those flamethrowers, forcing him to find a way to control the pipes and nozzles without looking over the wall. All that took was a couple of feet of pipe attached to the nozzle. They also enlarged some of the gun ports to accommodate the Ma Deuces. Ricochets had caused all of their injuries, so Jose added a layer of stone to the fence in front of the trenches, raising the front wall higher than the back wall.

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NACO, Ariz. – Federal officials yesterday said more than 500 new US Border Patrol agents would be assigned along the US – México border in southeastern Arizona to combat illegal immigration and protect against potential terrorists.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials said the plan would be announced today, just days before the start of a border vigil by an army of civilian volunteers angry about a lack of immigration enforcement by Congress and the Bush administration.

The DHS officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, expected that as many as 150 agents would be dispatched to Arizona within the next few days and that the rest would be on the border by midsummer – when most foreigners try to sneak into the country.

The move follows bipartisan criticism of President Bush's failure to fund 2,000 agents set out in the intelligence – overhaul bill that he signed in December. He had proposed funding for 210 new agents.

T.J. Bonner, president of the National Border Patrol Council union, immediately said the 500 new agents were not enough.

“Right now, things are so out of control, we have no idea who's crossing our borders, and we can't but chase after but a few of the people,” Mr. Bonner told the Associated Press. “It's going to take more than a couple of hundred agents to seal those gaps.”

Border Patrol agents, who last year apprehended more than 1 million illegal aliens, estimate that they apprehend only about 20 percent of the border-crossers. Last month, former Homeland Security Deputy Secretary James Loy notified Congress that intelligence indicates that al Qaeda plans to exploit the nation's porous border.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan yesterday said the President thought the country can do a better job of enforcing its borders through a guest-worker program that will allow the government to go after “those who are coming here for the wrong reason – whether it's terrorists or people intent on criminal activity.”

“This will free up our Border Patrol and border agents to go after those who should not be coming into this country in the first place,” he said. He also said DHS would have an announcement on this issue today.

Beginning this weekend, more than 1,000 volunteers will take part in a month long border vigil as part of the so – called Minuteman Project. They will focus on a 20-mile area of the San Pedro River Valley west of here, which has become one of the nation’s most active corridors for illegal aliens.

The volunteers plan to patrol the border and notify the Border Patrol of the location of foreigners crossing into the United States illegally.

“This is what this protest is all about, enforcing the law,” said Chris Simcox, one of the organizers of the Minuteman Project. “And that’s why so many people have responded.”

Mr. McClellan yesterday said the president “very clearly” addressed the debate over the Minuteman Project last week when he referred to the volunteers as vigilantes after a summit with Méxican President Vicente Fox and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

“It’s one thing if people are working along the border, simply to report suspicious activity, and that activity should be reported to the proper authorities – the Department of Homeland Security officials, who are there to enforce our borders. If people are operating outside of the law, that cannot be tolerated,” Mr. McClellan said.

Mr. Fox and other Méxican officials have said they fear that the volunteers will abuse the border crossers. (What, like the Méxicans do? ¡No habla, Vicente!)

The volunteers, who will be monitored by various civil and human rights organizations, have been told not to confront the aliens. Although some of the volunteers will be armed, organizers have banned rifles and have threatened to send home anyone who causes a confrontation.

An additional 350 agents are scheduled to arrive by Sept. 30, the officials said, describing them as new agents, or trainees, who are still undergoing their academy classes. In the meantime, they said, 200 veteran agents could be assigned on a temporary basis later this spring and early summer.

The Minuteman protest formally begins Friday, when volunteers are expected to spend that day registering and receiving their assignments, along with information about the area. Rallies scheduled for Saturday and Sunday will kick off the month long project.

o

Virginia Gov. Mark Warner yesterday signed into law a measure that denies illegal aliens public benefits, including access to Medicaid, welfare and local health care services.

Local government officials had said the state should not tell them how to spend local taxpayer dollars and that the measure could prevent them from allowing illegals into homeless shelters or free health clinics. (They can always go back to old México!)

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Sorry, did the report on the MM Project before I reported the news...

Are you sure L-I-B-E-R-A-L isn't a dirty word?

◦

Saturday, January 1, 2011...

"You're getting around well," John told Mike.

"Just about back to normal," Mike replied. "Thanks for building those flamethrowers, they melted the snow all the way to the road."

"It was something your doctor said to Ginger that got that rolling," John explained. "She suggested flamethrowers and I didn't know where to buy any so I built one. The main difference is that these use a high-pressure pump instead of compressed air. I had one hell of a time getting the right orifice, but they work pretty well now."

"Where did you find napalm?" Mike asked.

"Made it," John said. "It's not very complicated. The next time you guys go to Phoenix, you'll have to replace the liquid soap I used."

"We're going to need more motor oil," Jack added. "It's just a darn shame they didn't leave a Mk-19 at Barstow. I'd have grabbed one of those in a New York minute."

"You hear any more on the ham radio about the government?" Mike asked.

"Just the same rumors," Jack answered. "I don't see where we have a problem at the moment. On the other hand if they don't hold elections in 2012, I think we should start to worry. There is more food at the stores in Phoenix so someone must be doing something right."

"I'm still getting my disability payments but there hasn't been a COLA since 2007," Mike pointed out.

"Doesn't it strike the two of you as odd that Phoenix didn't get more refugees?" John asked.

“They were turning people away who didn’t own property or have Arizona Driver’s Licenses,” Jack said.

“I heard that too, Jack but how many people did they turn away?” John said. “I asked and it wasn’t very many.”

“Maybe FEMA set up some temporary shelters,” Jack suggested.

“Possibly, have you heard anything about FEMA shelters on the ham bands?” John asked.

“I haven’t. Hang on a second. Shelia have you heard anything on the ham bands about any FEMA shelters?” Jack responded.

“Right after the eruption there was talk about shelters but not long after that I didn’t hear anything else,” Shelia replied.

“That was 3 years ago,” John pointed out. “Think about it. We have food, but no fuel. We haven’t seen any new people in a long time. Someone down in Phoenix said that the ash from the eruption didn’t even make it as far east as Iowa. That means that everything east of the Mississippi should have been ok except possibly for a power interruption. After those terrorists brought the power system down I thought we’d seen the last of the power outages. And this thing about not having any mass communications stinks to high heaven. It’s not that I miss the liberal press, but this is ridiculous.”

“I’ve never been one who believed in conspiracy theories,” Mike said. “There’s probably a perfectly logical explanation of the things you mentioned.”

“I’m listening,” John replied. “*A good conspiracy is unprovable. I mean, if you can prove it, it means they screwed up somewhere along the line.*”

“That line was out of *Conspiracy Theory*,” Jack said. “There’s another one. *Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean that they aren’t out to get you.*”

“Are you saying that I’m wrong, Jack?” John asked.

“Not exactly, John. Honestly, I don’t know what to think,” Jack replied. “I agree that something is wrong. But, Mike might be right; there could be a perfectly logical explanation.”

“That’s begging the question,” John said. “Whatever. It sure isn’t worth arguing over when we don’t have more information than we do.”

“Hold up John,” Mike said. “Maybe we should go down to Phoenix and nose around. Ginger, did Doc Russell give you prescriptions to replace your expired drugs?”

"I asked about it, Mike, but he told me that medical supplies were strictly limited and that he couldn't write prescriptions any more except to be dispensed by the hospital. That's was why the hospital sent the painkillers home with you."

"Is that strange or what?" John asked.

"You might have a point," Mike said. "Our favorite gun dealer never seems to run out of ammo. The stores have more food. Conversely, we haven't seen any new people and fuel is almost totally unavailable. We have utilities but no communications. The best we can come up with off the ham bands is rumors. The only medicine available is from a hospital; not because it's unavailable but because the doctor can only write prescriptions to be dispensed by the hospital."

"Lock and load," Jack said, "We're going to Phoenix tomorrow."

"And do what Jack?" Mike asked.

"We can start out with our favorite gun dealer and see where that takes us," Jack suggested. "I've done business with that guy on and off for years. He only pretends that he doesn't know who I am. And, contrary to what he said, he's a class III dealer."

"That's not the guy I bought my M16's from," Mike pointed out.

"Yeah, but that was a special deal, partner," I've bought some of my NFA weapons from this guy."

o

January 2, 2011, Phoenix, Arizona...

"Hi fellas need more ammo?" the dealer asked.

"Cut the crap Marty, Mike and John are good people," Jack said. "Mike and I served in 'Nam together and he has several registered class III weapons. John here was in 'Nam too. He started out on the flamethrower and ended up on a thumper. I have a few things I'd like to talk to you about."

"Ok, Jack, if that's how you want it, what do you want to know?" Marty asked.

"Let's say for instance that I wanted some M61s or some M67s, could you help me out?" Jack asked. "Make a list, Marty."

"How many of what style?" Marty asked.

"For chits and giggles, say 10 cases of each," Jack replied.

"The 61s are easy; the Minutemen got a bunch off of the MS-13 people. I can maybe get you 10 cases of M67s," Marty said.

"Let's say we'd be in the market for XM-8s, complete with all of the accessories," Jack went on.

"That the new Buck Rogers rifle? How many?" Marty asked. "They'll cost you a grand apiece, you know."

"What about a Mk-19?" Jack asked.

"I can't sell you one of those," Marty said. "Assuming I could get one, it would cost you a minimum of \$25 grand. And, you know the ammo is \$25 a round."

"M112 C4?" Jack asked.

"M183 Demolition kits ok?" Marty asked.

"How many do you have, Marty?" Jack continued.

"More than you want, Jack," Marty replied.

"And if I wanted the M118?" Jack asked.

"By the case and expensive," Marty replied.

"Where do you get the stuff Marty?" Jack asked.

"Who in the hell do you think has the things you're describing, only the military," Marty scoffed.

"Right, front door or back door?" Jack asked.

"Right out the frigin' front door, Jack," Marty replied. "Say why all the questions? If I didn't know you better I'd say you were on a fishing expedition. Do you want the stuff or not?"

"We'll take 20 cases of the M61s, a Mk-19 but, I'll only give you \$17,500 for it, 40 cases of 40mm M430 HEDP and you can top that off with 6 cases of the M118," Jack replied.

"Hey you don't set my prices," Marty protested.

"Yes I do, unless you want the entire town to know that you're nothing but a shill for the Army," Jack said.

"I'm not the only one," Marty protested.

“Right, we’ll talk about that in a minute, start loading the order,” Jack said. “And Marty the price on the M61s are \$10 each and the M430s are \$15. That would make it \$2,400 for the M61s, \$17,500 for the Mk-19 Mod 3, including the M3 tripod and M64 cradle, \$28,800 for the M430s and your cost plus 10% on the M118’s. Let’s just call it \$50,000 even.”

“You have the gold?” Marty asked.

“Fifty shiny Eagles still in their plastic envelopes,” Jack replied. “Put the Mk-19, tripod and cradle in the back of the Hummer and everything else on the trailer.”

“Here you go, Marty,” Jack said handing him 50 of the Eagles they had recovered from the MZB’s.

◦

“Are you sure you don’t want a pound of flesh?” Marty asked.

“Only one other thing, Marty, I need a name,” Jack said.

“I deal with some Army Captain,” Marty replied.

“Wrong answer, I want the name at the top, not the bottom,” Jack said. “Something very bad is going on with this country when you can get me anything I want. For instance, none of the radio stations are back on the air even though Phoenix has had power for about 2 years.”

“There is only one top dog, Jack, the military Governor,” Marty answered. “The word is that he controls everything.”

“What military Governor?” Mike asked.

“A few months after the eruption each of the surviving states was assigned a military Governor and a FEMA group,” Marty said. “Nobody talks about it because the walls have ears if you know what I mean.”

“Why no refugees, Marty?” Mike pressed.

“There must be several hundred thousand or more locked up in a camp they built at Luke AFB,” Marty replied.

“What’s the deal on the President?” Mike asked.

"I heard that they keep him around to handle foreign relations," Marty answered. "I also heard that the military is holding his wife and daughters under guard at Mt. Weather, but that's only a rumor."

"You could really get us an XM-8?" Mike asked.

"If you promise to leave, I'll give you one," Marty said.

"I'll take 4 and I want them with all of the different barrels and accessories," Mike replied. "Hell, I'll even pay you an Eagle apiece for them if you provide enough of those plastic magazines."

"Mike I'll give you 4 complete rifles with all the different barrels, stocks, etc. and a dozen 30-round and 2 75 round drums for each of the rifles," Marty said. "But I won't go under my cost and that's 5 Eagles."

"Deal," Mike said.

"And you won't be back, right?" Marty asked.

"Wrong, Marty, we'll be back but only to buy ammo at the going price," Jack laughed.

"I think I'll just shut to door and go get drunk," Marty said after he loaded the 4 XM-8 weapons systems.

o

"Well?" Jack asked later over a burger and fries at McCormick & Schmick's.

"Well what?" Mike asked. "I believe the guy, he was practically peeing his pants. But, that means that all of the civilian leadership is under the control of the military rather than the other way around."

"I don't know if that qualifies as a Conspiracy or a Junta," John said.

"There are a number of things that junta (hUn-tah) could refer to," Jose explained.

"It can be a military dictatorship or military rule.

"In the history of Spain, junta ("coming-together") was the name chosen by several local administrations forming in Spain during the Peninsula War as a patriotic alternative to the official administration topped by the French invaders. In Spanish America, the Creole juntas were formally loyal to Ferdinand VII of Spain, but in the power void, they became actually independent, preparing the independence of Spanish America. Today the Juntas are remembered in the autonomous government of Spain.

“Military rule may mean several things in modern terms:

“When a country or area is conquered after invasion and placed under Belligerent, also known as Military occupation. When a country or region is placed under martial law at times it may also be a police state as under totalitarianism. When a country is invaded or placed under military law. When a country is governed by a military dictatorship as with a junta or “The Generals” or under a powerful Generalissimo or when a country or region is judged by a military tribunal.”

“A history professor,” Jack laughed.

“Nah, just a Mexican American familiar with the history of his native country and Spain,” Jose smiled. “What we heard today sounds like a little bit of both a Conspiracy and a Junta.”

“Hmm, so Bush is head of the government that interacts with the remainder of the world but the military is in charge of the nation?” Mike asked, putting everything together.

“One theory is good as another, I suppose,” Jack agreed.

“But there is a law that prohibits that,” John complained. “It’s called Posse Comitatus”

“There are also the Patriot Act,” Jack pointed out. “The way they changed the laws after 9/11, anything seems possible.”

“But when you talk about communications, you’re talking about the 1st Amendment,” John said.

“The government spent years destroying the 2nd Amendment, maybe they’re working on the 1st for a change,” Mike shook his head. “What’s sacred about the order of the first 10 Amendments? There is always the possibility that the people running things took advantage of a National Emergency to create a real National Emergency.”

“So what you’re suggesting is that they used the eruption as an opportunity to take over, right?” John asked.

“Right, John. Now we have to find out who *they* are,” Mike replied.

“That’s a bunch of James Bond shit,” Jack suggested. “We were trained to be soldiers, not spies. Anyway, we’re too old.”

“That may be, Jack,” Mike reflected. “On the other hand we have two young men back at the ranch that are sharper than tacks. They might enjoy the challenge.”

“My Juan would say yes to that in a heartbeat,” Jose smiled.

“Let’s finish eating and get all of our new toys back to the ranch,” Mike suggested. “We can talk to the boys about this in the morning. Who’s buying tonight?”

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“You’re going to do WHAT?” Ginger responded when Mike explained what they had in mind. “You old farts are going to get the boys killed.”

“Somebody has to do it honey,” Mike replied. “We talked it over on the way back from Phoenix. We decided that the best way to find out what was going on was to get some people on the inside. What better way to get insiders than to have the boys join the military?”

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 24 – Operation ‘Restore Hope’

Neat huh? Almost sounds like one of those names the government assigns to its little wars, doesn't it? It was. That was the name of the operation that G. H. W. Bush had in Somalia. Then Clinton got his hands on the operation. We lost some good men in Somalia.

“What's with the new boy toys?” Ginger asked.

“That, my dear, is a 40mm machinegun called a Mk-19, Mod 3,” Mike explained. “It shoots about the same grenades as the thumpers use.”

“What's with the ray guns?” Ginger laughed.

“Those are the XM-8 5.56x45mm rifles, honey,” Mike explained. “That's what they're issuing to our troops these days. You can make it into a pistol, carbine, rifle or sniper rifle. I bought Tom and Teresa and you and me each one of the rifles.”

“Show me the part that isn't made out of plastic,” she insisted.

“Hang on, I'm looking,” Mike replied.

◦

January 3, 2011...

They had talked about several names for the planned activity, but all of the good names had been used before. They settled on a name that didn't necessarily describe a war, as such. The funny thing about the original Restore Hope was that Bush sent the military in by means of an amphibious landing ala Iwo Jima. Then the Somalis figured out you could shoot a chopper down with an RPG and Clinton brought the troops home. Something was very wrong with the system when 2 soldiers could earn CMH's in an operation to feed some starving people. And, a CMH was very hard to come by in recent years. The US didn't shoot women and children even though they killed our boys.

The plan was to have Tom and Juan go to Phoenix and either enlist in the military or get a civilian job with FEMA, preferably the latter. Teresa and Selena weren't at all happy with the proposal but Tom and Juan reassured their wives that they'd send for them as soon as they got established. Meanwhile at the ranch, they mounted the Mk-19, Mod 3 and set it to cover the front fence along with the flamethrowers. The next time someone showed up trying to rush the place, they were in for quite a surprise.

◦

January 4, 2011, Phoenix, Arizona...

“We don’t get many people trying to sign up to work for us,” the FEMA recruiter explained. “What brought the two of you to us?”

“Mister, jobs are hard to come by and we both have families to support,” Tom replied.

“The job might include some unpleasant duties,” the recruiter went on.

“Juan will hold ‘em and I’ll shoot ‘em,” Tom said. “Look I have a wife and 2 kids. Have you priced things lately? Fuel is impossible to get and food is almost beyond the reach of the average family. We both speak English and Spanish, if that makes any difference.”

“Are you familiar with firearms?” the recruiter asked.

“Is there anyone these days who isn’t?” Juan asked.

“All right, here’s the deal,” the recruiter continued on like he’d heard it hundreds of times before. “You’ll be sent for a month of physical conditioning and another two months of training. That training will be divided between classroom instruction and paramilitary operations.”

“Are we going to be soldiers?” Juan asked.

“Not exactly, but depending upon how well you do in school, you could end up hunting subversives,” the recruiter replied.

“And a subversive is?” Tom asked.

“Anyone who doesn’t support and defend the Constitution,” the recruiter answered. “Any other questions?”

“Where do we sign?” Tom asked.

“Right here, next to the X,” the recruiter grinned. “Now, raise your right hands and repeat after me...”

“I, state your name, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.”

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“Jeez, where did they find these guys?” Tom panted. “I thought I was in pretty good shape, but they’ve run me half to death.”

“I heard that they were retired Marine Gunnery Sergeants,” Juan panted. “Save your breath, we still have 5 miles to go.”

Physical conditioning was 4 weeks of hell interspersed with moments of sheer terror. Basically they ran 5 miles before breakfast, had 30 minutes to eat and get squared around and then did 2 hours of calisthenics. After lunch, they loaded on a pack filled with rocks and did a hike to build their leg muscles and endurance. Two weeks into the training, they were up to a 15-mile hike, daily. Mike, Jack and John had warned them that depending on who did the training, they could be in for a tough time. The final test was a 26-mile timed march. Those who passed went into the second phase of training. Those who didn't were recycled back to the very beginning.

“I'm not so sure that GS-6 pay is worth the misery,” Tom told Juan.

“We made into the second phase, Tom,” Juan replied. “This is where the fun begins and we start finding out what we came here to learn in the first place.”

“*Subversive person* means any person who commits, attempts to commit, or aids in the commission, or advocates, abets, advises or teaches by any means any person to commit, attempt to commit, or aid in the commission of any act intended to overthrow, destroy or alter, or to assist in the overthrow, destruction or alteration of, the constitutional form of the government of the United States or any political subdivision of by revolution, force, or violence; or who with knowledge that the organization is an organization that becomes or remains a member of a subversive organization or a foreign subversive organization.”

Translation: The subversives are whoever we tell you they are.

Tom and Juan were number 1 and 2 in their class. They got assigned to the FEMA Phoenix Subversive Activities Team (PSAT). They also got a week of leave to go back to Sedona and retrieve their families. The Team was housed in a converted condominium in Phoenix. Housing was considered to be part of the compensation. Their issue pistol was a Kimber Eclipse II 10mm. Their issue rifles were the perfected version of the M29 OICW. They were dressed all in black and were wearing the Interceptor body armor with the new level V Titanium plates. The FEMA Subversive Activities Team members were classified as federal peace officers.

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“Look at the two of you,” Mike said when they arrived back at the ranch. “Did you forget your civies?”

“Dad, we wear these uniforms 24/7,” Tom explained. “Juan and I graduated at the top of our class and made it on the FEMA PSAT.”

"That's some pretty serious firepower just to arrest some subversives," Mike responded. "What kind of subversives?"

"A subversive is whoever they tell us they are," Juan replied.

"Did you boys ever read *1984*, *Animal Farm* or *Fahrenheit 451*?" Mike asked.

"No," they replied.

"Maybe you should," Jack said entering the house. "They finally got that weapon system figured out, huh?"

"Yes, Jack and it's better than they initially thought it would be," Tom answered. "The 25mm rounds have been upgraded to block II."

"Bring us up to date," Mike suggested.

"The Reader's Digest version of the training was 4 weeks of hell from some retired Marine Corp Gunny's," Tom replied. "Then we got 8 weeks of mixed classroom and paramilitary training. Sort of like a civilian version of the Special Forces. Our jobs are to pick up people classified as subversives and transport them to the reeducation camp at Luke AFB."

"What kind of subversives?" Jack asked.

"They just finished rounding up the last of the people in the Minuteman Project," Juan explained. "We heard that they're going after an organization called *26 Men* next."

"Wasn't that the name of a TV series when we were kids?" Jack asked.

*Saddle up, saddle up.
Saddle up, saddle up, saddle up.*

*This is the story of 26 Men.
Who rode the Arizona Territory.
High is the glory of 26 Men,
Whose parish helped to fill the Territory.*

*26 Men who saddled up and then
Rode out to answer duty's call.
26 Men who lived to ride again
And fight for the rights and the liberty of all.*

*This is the story of 26 Men
Enforcing law within the Territory.
Praise be the Glory of 26 Men*

Who rode the Arizona Territory.

Ride on. Ride on. Ride on.

“Don’t give up your day job, Mike” Ginger laughed.

“The 26 men were the original Arizona Rangers, boys,” Mike explained.

“They are at the top of the list of subversives, now,” Tom said. “Apparently one of the top guys is a gun dealer in Phoenix. But, nobody knows which one, there are so many.”

“How long will you be working for FEMA?” John asked.

“Nine more months, John,” Juan answered. “We didn’t read the fine print in the contract and we’re obligated for a full year.”

“I think that maybe Jose and I will move to Mesa to be a little closer to you and your families,” Mike suggested. “Jack, we’ll set up some form of communication between there and the ranch and keep in close touch.”

“We’ll see you later, folks, we have wives waiting,” Juan announced.

“What exactly do you have in mind Mike?” Jack asked.

“Why don’t you and John come down to Phoenix for a couple of days?” Mike asked. “I have this sudden urge to buy some of those M29 OICW’s.”

“Say you don’t suppose Marty...” Jack started to say.

“It would make a perfect cover, wouldn’t it?” Mike cut Jack off.

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“Now what?” Marty said when they entered the gun shop.

“I’d like 4 of the M29 OICW’s,” Mike answered.

“And we wouldn’t mind becoming an Arizona Rangers,” Jack added.

Never play poker with a car salesman. Car salesmen learn to read faces and Jack was a very, very good car salesman before he retired.

“Step into the back room,” Marty suggested.

“Mike those weapons will cost you about 10 grand apiece,” Marty said. “Jack if you want to be a Ranger, you should go over to the statehouse and apply, but I’ll have to tell you, I think you’re a little bit old.”

“My son Tom and Jose’s son Juan just joined the FEMA PSAT,” Mike said quietly.

“Say, I’ve heard of them,” Marty said. “Nothing good, but I’ve heard of them.”

“Their next target is an organization that goes by the name of *26 Men*,” Jack added.

“So?” Marty asked.

“Want me to sing you the lyrics to the theme song, Marty?” Mike asked.

“I already know the lyrics, Mike,” Marty replied. “Anyway, what’s in a name? I’d bet that an organization like that would be a whole lot bigger than just 26 men.”

“If it’s a big organization, maybe they need a branch in northern Arizona,” Jack suggested.

“Maybe they already have one in someplace like Flagstaff,” Marty countered.

“A man could avoid a whole lot of trouble if he maybe had a little inside information,” John pointed out.

“I’ll tell you what Mike,” Marty said. “Those 6 cases over there each contain an M29 OICW. “You can have them for \$2,500 apiece. The 25mm ammo is \$2500 per hundred. You can use your M16 ammo in the KE weapon. It uses the XM-8 magazines.”

“I’ll take all 6 Marty,” Jack said. “Mike and Jose are going to move down here to Mesa until their sons complete their FEMA obligations. They will be keeping in close touch with the sons and their families. They probably will just use Mike and Tom’s XM-8’s.”

“Do you men have any idea what you’re letting yourselves in for?” Marty asked.

“We’re calling it Operation Restore Hope, Marty,” Mike replied.

“That sounds like a prayer,” Marty said.

“Maybe it is, Marty,” Jack acknowledged, “Maybe it is.”

“All right. The deal is that you will actually be members of the Arizona Rangers with full authority,” Marty explained. “Not all of the *26 Men* are men, but that doesn’t make any difference and you don’t really need to know who the *26 Men* are. The organization is set up on a cell system so that no one can compromise too many others. I’ll give you a

name in Flagstaff, Jack and he'll be your contact. "Mike, Jose and you will work through me. I'm going to need every bit of information you can feed me."

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There were a lot of empty homes in Mesa, which was Snow Bird country. They went looking and found two empty adjacent homes in Farnsworth Village East. A check with the neighbors indicated that they hadn't seen the owners in 3 years. One neighbor told them that if the owners were still alive, they would probably appreciate someone moving in and taking care of their homes. The owners were two couples from northwestern Nebraska. The neighbor had keys and he gave Jose and Mike the keys and introduced his wife and him. They were from northern Iowa and their names were Dale and Gayle.

It was easy to tell where people in the Village were from. If they had a 6' fence in their backyard, they were from California. People from the Midwest seemed to prefer either a 3' fence or no fence at all. Everyone went back to the ranch and Mike and Jose loaded clothes and weapons in their vehicles and they headed back to Mesa with Ginger and Maria. Maria left their youngest with Jack and Shelia. Jack took off for Flagstaff the moment he got back.

Mike and Jose didn't let on to Tom and Juan that they were now a part of the *26 Men Organization*. Tom and Juan told them as much as they could about planned operations and the old men asked casual questions that elicited additional facts. All of the information was fed to Marty but only on the condition that the *26 Men* would use it to avoid confrontations with the FEMA PSAT. Those turned out to be the longest 9 months in both the parents and their sons' lives. Of all of the new patriot type organizations in the Phoenix area, the *26 Men Organization* seemed to have the best luck avoiding the PSAT, but even they got caught occasionally. And despite being armed to the teeth with the latest and greatest military weapons, Tom and Juan found that they never needed to discharge the weapons. Usually just the sight of that awful looking M29 was enough to get people to surrender.

The one-year obligation ended and Tom and Juan declined to stay on. They told their bosses that they were going back to Sedona and see about joining up with the Flagstaff Police Department or the Coconino County Sheriff's Department. Coconino County is the 2nd largest county in the United States and because of the great geographic and population centers, the Sheriff maintained eight satellite offices located in Forest Lakes, Blue Ridge, Sedona, Tuba City, Williams, Grand Canyon, Fredonia and Page with the County Seat located in Flagstaff.

Some residents of Sedona were starting to move back into town so Tom and Juan went to Flagstaff and talked to the Coconino County Sheriff about reopening the Sedona office. Meanwhile Ginger and Maria had given the two houses a good scrubbing and returned the keys to Dale and Gayle. Maria actually picked up a part-time job cleaning Dale and Gayle's home while she was in Mesa. And, when it came time to leave, Marty

had a gift for Mike and Jose. He gave each of them one of those M29 OICW's. Mike bought each of them 200 rounds of the 25mm ammo.

"Those Sheriff's uniforms look a lot better on you than those darned FEMA uniforms," Jack said.

"The Sheriff almost didn't hire us because of our background," Tom replied.

"How did you get him to hire you?" Mike asked.

"Name dropping," Juan laughed. "Tom told him that if he couldn't be a Deputy Sheriff he'd just join the Arizona Rangers and kick FEMA's butt."

"You might be surprised who is a member of the *26 Men Organization*," Jack smiled.

"Do you mean besides the 4 of you?" Tom asked.

"How did you know?" Mike asked.

"We were 1st and 2nd in our class," Juan replied. "We fed you all of the information we could. That was the deal wasn't it? We feed you information and you feed Marty information."

"You know about Marty?" Jack asked.

"We do, they don't," Tom replied. "That undercover who got his throat slit made an illegal buy from Marty. He was an independent operator with no local contacts so we gave him an ear-to-ear smile."

"Illegal as in?" Jack asked.

"Those M29s are government only," Tom answered. "Just like the Interceptor armor with the new level V Titanium plates."

"What's a level V plate?" Jack asked.

"It will stop .50 cal ball," Tom replied. "Of course with the amount of energy involved, you might wish you died instead."

"We ought to get those," Mike suggested.

"They weight 30+ pounds, Dad," Tom pointed out. "Remember, we didn't carry heavy battle packs so the extra weight wasn't a problem. They still issue level IV to the military."

"Where is the military and what's the deal with the radio stations?" John asked.

“The military is all over the eastern and western US,” Tom answered. “The radio stations don’t have anyone to operate them because they’re all locked up. They started to push the freedom of speech issue and an Executive Order was issued to shut the stations down for the duration of the emergency. We all know that that was a long time ago, but somehow no one ever got around to declaring the emergency over even though it has been over for more than a year. Anyone who objected to the government’s action was labeled a subversive and locked up.”

“How can they get away with that?” John asked clearly angry.

“They told us that the media was effectively yelling fire in a theater with their criticism of the way the government was handling the crisis,” Juan explained. “Now we all know that you can’t yell fire in a theater, unless it’s burning. Somehow it’s never made it to the Supreme Court.”

“Why not?” John asked.

“When the complainant dies, they have to start all over,” Juan continued.

“Someone is doing wet work?” John asked.

“Not someone, John. They have a whole division of someone’s,” Tom replied. “A majority of the people that work for FEMA are mercenaries. By the time you added up all of the pay and benefits we had, we were making close to \$100,000 a year. Top pay for a SAT agent is close to \$200,000.”

“It sounds to me like the country took a wrong turn,” Mike said. “What are the odds that we could free the people being held at Luke, AFB?”

“It won’t be easy,” Tom said. “The guard towers all have an up-armor kit on the shells and bulletproof windows.”

“How heavy is that armor?” John asked.

“It’s the stuff that they developed to up armor the Hummer’s during Iraqi Freedom,” Tom replied.

The M72 LAW is capable of penetrating a foot of armor, but its effective range is only 170 to 220 meters,” John said. “They ought to push right through those up-armor kits, assuming we can get close enough.”

“How close is close enough?” Tom asked.

“Under 100-meters,” John replied.

“They have a reaction force,” Tom commented.

“You said that level V plates would withstand .50 caliber ball, right?” Jack said. “How good are they against .50 caliber AP and APIT?”

“They won’t stop the AP,” Tom said.

“I love it when a plan comes together,” Mike laughed. “Ok who is going to re-belt the .50 cal ammo so that it’s all AP and APIT?”

o

Combat mix for the M1 Abrams tank is 4 to 1 AP to APIT. It wasn’t necessary to load belts because they already had some. There were 12 guard towers set up Luke. The ranchers had about 40 LAW rockets and they had help from the Flagstaff group of 26 *Men*. They pedestal mounted 4 of the machineguns in the back of pickups (connected to the frames). They also mounted the Mk-19, Mod 3. Tom suggested that they would probably have the best luck if they took out all 12 towers and attacked Luke from the West side. Because Tom and Juan were the only two people in their group who were familiar with the setup at Luke, they took the advice.

Those pickups sure weren’t up-armored. They wouldn’t stop any kind of bullet, especially those 25mm projectiles that the Reaction Force carried. Any way that they did this, they were very likely to lose some of their people. With that in mind, Juan and Tom were assigned to be passengers in the pickups and to direct the attack using CB radios. The attackers had 40 LAW rockets, 4 Ma Deuces, 1 Mk-19 (Mod 3), 8 M29 OICW’s, plenty of ammo and a whole lot of courage. The operation was set to begin at oh dark thirty on March 23, 2012.

You know who insisted on going along, right? They only had one Paramedic in their group. The older fellas were old school and they didn’t want the women in combat. They had also been married long enough to know better than to argue with the women. Sometime after midnight they left to travel to Luke. Jose had been sent to Phoenix to let Marty know what they were planning and Marty told Jose that he would do what he could to supply additional people to help free the people from the camp. They arrived at Luke around 2:30am and by 4:25am everyone was in position. At precisely 0:430 12 rockets hit the guard towers.

Alarms began sounding adding to the confusion. The reaction force rolled out to meet the attackers and ran headlong into the .50 cal AP and APIT bullets. The Mk-19 was used to blow holes into the chain link fence at 20-yard intervals. The reaction force people managed to get off a few rounds with those 25mms. The rounds could be set to explode 3’ over the head of a person it was aimed at. Two of the machine gunners went down and Tom and Juan bailed and took their places. The AP ammo made short work of the remaining reaction force and the battle ended in about 30 minutes.

Before it was over, all of the gunners had been hit, including Tom and Juan. Unfortunately for FEMA it was already too late and people were streaming out of the holes in the fence and pulling the fence down so more people could escape. Marty was there with about 100 members of the Phoenix chapter of *26 Men* and they led the people away in groups and loaded them aboard trucks. Ginger triaged the wounded and assigned priorities. Juan had taken rounds in both arms from the 5.56 on one of those M29s. He was neatly stitched from one side to the other and his Interceptor armor and level IV plate had kept him from being killed. Tom had a leg shot out from under him and his femoral artery was pumping blood very fast and he got a higher priority.

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 25 – Snowball

Neither of the boys died from their wounds. Tom lost a fair amount of blood and both ended up in Dr. Russell's basement. It was quite the basement, lined with a half dozen gun cases. The good doctor had at least as many guns as they did at the ranch and he was a member of the *26 Men Organization*. He did surgery and stitched the artery saving Tom's life. And then he got into another room of his basement and came dragging out box after box of hard to find medical supplies. Next he suggested that they leave the boys with him and he'd bring them to the ranch when they were sufficiently healed. The doctor's basement was fully equipped from when he'd joined a new medical group and closed his office. Hell, he even had an X-Ray machine.

"You'll be on crutches for a while Tom, Dr. Russell said. "It would be better if you had a wheelchair to use."

"Dad's is in the basement, he never uses it," Tom replied.

"I'd forgotten about that wheelchair does it still work?" Russell asked.

"It has a new battery so I think so," Tom answered.

"I heard that the two of you went to work for FEMA just so you could spy on them," Russell said.

"Where did you hear that Doc?" Juan asked.

"Juan, my number is 23," Russell explained. "You young hotshots don't have a market on being a patriot, you know. I may not carry a rifle in combat, but I serve my purpose with the cause."

"FEMA doesn't have any idea who the *26 Men* are," Tom said. "We arrested a few people and put them in the camp but they were never very high in the organization."

"We fed you those people," Russell laughed. "They were members of the organization who we couldn't be sure of. Some of them would probably have turned back into the sheeple they really were the minute the country was restored back to normal."

"Will that ever happen?" Juan asked.

"It already is, Juan," Russell replied. "On the east coast they're working to get into Mt. Weather and free Laura Bush and the girls. There is an American patriotic movement working to push those men who would be Kings out of power."

"My Dad said it was some Generals," Juan commented.

“Close, but no cigar, Juan, it was some Colonels,” Russell explained. “By the time a man or woman becomes a general officer they’ve been thoroughly vetted. Once in a while a guy like General Walker slips in but they are few and far between. General Edwin A. Walker was known to most JFK assassination buffs as the man whom Oswald allegedly shot at in April 1963. The general’s right-wing connections were often noted, as was the fact that he was forced out of his command by the Kennedy administration for his political indoctrination of his troops. His activities during the race riots in Oxford, Mississippi in 1962 were also often mentioned, when he was arrested on four federal charges including insurrection. Walker made a public statement at Oxford:

This is Edwin A. Walker. I am in Mississippi beside Gov. Ross Barnett. I call for a national protest against the conspiracy from within.

Rally to the cause of freedom in righteous indignation, violent vocal protest and bitter silence under the flag of Mississippi at the use of Federal troops.

This today is a disgrace to the nation in dire peril, a disgrace beyond the capacity of anyone except its enemies. This is the conspiracy of the crucifixion by anti-Christ Conspirators of the Supreme Court in their denial of prayer and their betrayal of a nation.

“He held the Silver Star and the Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster,” Russell explained. “He was just some sort of anti-communist super patriot. He wasn’t indicted by a Grand Jury and eventually he sued and won damages against some media organizations. It ended up in the Supreme Court and Walker lost the money because the court said that public figures are at risk even for statements based on lies. It was some sort of 1st Amendment issue.”

“Anyway, this coup was led by a bunch of Colonels and once they had the First Lady and Bush’s family imprisoned, Bush’s hands were tied,” Russell continued. “Apparently they had enough Divisions within their sphere of influence to force the Joint Chiefs to capitulate. One thing is certain; they don’t care for the media.”

“Where does FEMA fit into this equation?” Tom asked.

“I have no idea,” Russell replied. “Probably some petty bureaucrat who wanted power. Their mission got subverted somewhere along the way and that bureaucrat got in bed with the Colonels.”

“Some of those reporters cross the line,” Tom suggested.

“No doubt they do, Tom but where do we draw that line?” Russell asked. “The 1st Amendment is simplicity in itself. It says, *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*”

“Guys like that Geraldo Rivera shouldn’t be allowed on the radio or TV,” Tom muttered.

“Are you talking about him lending aid and comfort to the enemy?” Russell asked. “If what he had done been that, he’d have been prosecuted, 1st Amendment or not. I read an article about Geraldo Rivera and Peter Arnett. It said:”

After infuriating military commanders by revealing, on-air, the current position and upcoming attack plan of the 101st Airborne Division – a violation of the most basic rules for correspondents – he was ordered off the battlefield for endangering the lives of the troops he’d hooked up with.

True to form, Geraldo blamed somebody else – in this case, the rats among his pathetic former employers, NBC – for getting him yanked. Also true to form – sort of a Geraldo trademark – he provided no factual basis whatsoever for what he’d just said.

“In Geraldo’s mind, this was not a war among the United States, Britain and Iraq. It’s a rating-points war among CNN, MSNBC and Fox News Network. All those tanks and ships and troops were little more than a convenient, compelling backdrop for his Geraldo-ness.

“Fox got what it deserved with Geraldo. After his performance in Afghanistan, where he brandished a pistol and vowed to *take out* Osama bin Laden, and flagrantly lied about his location in a report on *hallowed ground* where US casualties had occurred, he should never have been sent back to a war zone by any news organization that wants its coverage taken seriously.”

“So what happened to Geraldo?” Juan asked.

“He’s probably locked up with the rest of the media drawing maps on the prison floor,” Russell laughed.

o

“They are going to be ok, Ginger,” Mike repeated. “Dr. Russell said so. Take a pill and chill out. I’m not so sure my pickup survived, however.”

“Men!” Ginger snapped. “Your son is laying wounded in a basement in Phoenix and all you’re worried about is your darn pickup!”

“I’m concerned about Tom and Juan, but I’m not worried,” Mike replied. “They are getting excellent medical treatment. I am more worried that FEMA will figure out who was behind that attack.”

“Russell said something about this being the snowball just beginning its roll down the hill,” Ginger shared.

“The price of freedom is always high, Ginger, we lost some good people today,” Mike said.

“None of our people,” Ginger replied.

“None of our people killed, no, but that was as much luck as anything. Some of those people didn’t have any sort of protection while we had level IV body armor,” Mike continued. “The lack of protection didn’t keep them from going down to Phoenix.”

“It’s so sad, 8 people getting killed,” Ginger said.

“They were responsible for freeing over 100,000.” Mike responded, “Marty says that they can’t possibly transport all of the people with the limited number of vehicles they have. So, he and some of his people are staying behind and keeping FEMA off their backs until they can disappear into Phoenix. They may turn out to be more martyrs.”

◦

“We had better maintain a heightened state of alert,” Jack suggested.

“Just make sure that whoever is on guard duty has those M29s,” Mike replied. “We can remount the Ma Deuces and the Mk-19 tomorrow.”

“Go rest your back and don’t worry about it,” Jack instructed. “We’re going to do all of that right away. As long as we have those combat ammo belts we’ll just use those. If any of those FEMA people show up we’ll either punch them full of holes or toast them with the flamethrowers.”

“Toasted Swiss cheese, huh?” Mike laughed.

“How would you like your steak, sir, medium or well done?” Jack smiled.

◦

“Mike, wake up,” Ginger poked him. “Jack says we have company coming.”

“What time is it?” Mike asked.

“About 5am,” she replied.

“What day?” he asked.

“Saturday, you only got about 7 hours of sleep.”

“I’ll get dressed, Ginger, can you make a pot of coffee?” Mike asked.

o

“Did you stay up all night, Jack?” Mike asked.

“No, I got up around 4:30, is that coffee for me?” Jack pointed.

“Oh, sorry. What’s going on that you got me up?” Mike repeated.

“The guards spotted movement on the other side of the road about 15 minutes ago, Mike. I roused everyone out just in case.”

“I see you have the .50’s and the Mk-19 back in place.”

“They did that last night and brought up extra ammo for the Ma Deuces.”

“So, did you send out scouts?” Mike asked.

“John sent John and Bob and they are only carrying knives so they don’t inadvertently fire a gun and give themselves away.”

“I’ll swear those two are half Indian,” Mike said. “I should have bought some of those tomahawks when I was in Ventura that time.”

“Was that the Disneyland trip?” Jack asked.

“Yeah, Jack, Disneyland and Knott’s Berry Farm and Magic Mountain,” Mike chuckled. “I think that was 10 years ago.”

“Here they come,” Jack said.

“Here are 2 more of the M29s for your inventory,” John said.

“What did you find?” Mike asked.

“They were 2 of them,” John said. “I think they were those SAT guys. “We have their guns and radios but we’ll have to go back and get the rest of the equipment and bury the bodies. They were on foot, but I’d imagine their vehicle is down the road a ways. We can empty it out and take it somewhere it won’t be found.”

“Look at this,” Jack said. “They had the 3rd generation night vision.”

“I just hope they had plenty of ammo for their M29s,” Mike said. “I’ll walk with Jose and the boys and pick up the rest of their equipment.”

The standard load-out for the M29 was 7 30-round mags of 5.56 and 4 6-round mags of 25mm. The contractor had exceeded the goal and the weapon system weighed about

13 pounds 9 ounces. The standard issue 5.56x45mm ammo was the M995 AP round. The FEMA people also had 2 M67s grenades and 2 smoke grenades. They stripped the bodies of the level V body armor and carried the new equipment back across the road. While John and Bob buried the bodies, Jose and Mike went south on the road until they found the HMMWV. They drove it back to the ranch and started to strip off anything useful. They found 48 additional rounds of the 25mm ammo, several bandoleers of M995, plus a case of MRE's. Obviously these 2 men weren't planning being there very long or they were expecting company.

"So, which is it, were they leaving or should we expect company for dinner?" Mike asked.

"As long as we can make that HMMWV disappear, we can deny having ever seen them," Jack suggested. "However I think we should put a call in to Marty and have that doctor get the boys back up here. They might know some of the people who show up and it could give us just the edge we need to persuade them that we're like Sergeant Schultz. You know whom I mean. Sergeant *I know nothing.*"

The call was made and Marty called Dr. Russell. Dr. Russell put Tom's leg in a cast and told him that if anyone asked, he'd fallen off a horse and broken his leg. Juan presented a different problem because of bullet holes in both arms. Finally Russell bandaged the arms and told Juan that he was recovering nicely from the surgery to remove those awful tattoos. Juan was going to need to fake that his injuries weren't at all serious, just sore. With records in hand, the three of them headed for the ranch. Dr. Russell was explaining everything to Ginger when FEMA came rolling in. Since Mike's electric wheelchair didn't have a leg support, Russell had brought one and John had attached it. Tom was propped up in the wheelchair in his living room and Juan was sitting at the kitchen table playing cards with Selena, his shirt sleeves rolled up to just below the bandages.

"Can I help you people?" Jack asked.

"We had two scouts up in the area checking on the residents," the man in charge replied.

"SAT?" Jack asked.

"That's right," the leader said. "Have you seen them?"

"I haven't seen anybody. There hasn't been anyone pass by here in several days," Jack replied. "But if you want to talk to a couple of former SAT men, Mike's son Tom is in that house over there and Juan is in that Adobe down there. Maybe they saw something."

"What happened to you?" the agent asked.

"My leg's shot," Tom said. "They told me I fell off a horse. Are you guys with PSAT? Juan and I were until very recently."

“Have you seen 2 SAT agents in the area recently?” the agent asked.

“Juan and I just got back from Phoenix a little while ago,” Tom said. “I had surgery on my leg and while the doctor had the knife all sharpened up; I heard that Juan got some tattoos taken off. The doctor is with my Mom giving her instructions for our care.”

“I see, we’ll check with Juan,” the agent said.

“Are you Juan?” the agent asked.

“I know you, you’re a Captain aren’t you?” Juan said. “That’s right I’m Juan Cortez.”

“It’s Lieutenant, Juan,” the Lieutenant said. “Did you just get back from Phoenix with Tom?”

“Right, Tom and Dr. Russell,” Juan said. “Tom got his leg messed up and as long as I was there, Russell worked on my arms.”

“I thought they took tattoos off with a laser,” the Lieutenant said.

“I always thought that too, Lieutenant,” Juan said and showed his bandages. “This hurts like a bitch.”

◦

Rule One: Don’t lie. The agents hadn’t gotten past the ranch, only to the ranch. Jack hadn’t seen any bodies. Tom’s leg really was all shot up. And Russell really did work on Juan’s arms.

Rule Two: Appear to cooperate. Sic them on Tom and Juan and they can sic them on Dr. Russell and Ginger.

Improvise. Adapt. Overcome. Smile. Scratch the B and the last r off your ‘In-and-Out Burger’ bumper sticker. In real life, Sergeant Schultz (John Banner) was a Jew who was briefly in a Nazi Concentration camp. He died in 1973 on his 63rd birthday in Vienna, Austria. Truth is stranger than fiction. Richard Dawson must have really died when Arnold killed him in *The Running Man*; he hadn’t made a movie since. Richard Dawson’s great claim to fame was that he had once been married to Diana Dors, England’s Marilyn Monroe.

◦

FEMA moved on because there was no sign of either the 2 men or the HMMWV. When John and Bob returned, they brought the nearly new tires and the batteries from the HMMWV so either Mike or Jack could use them on one of their Hummers. These were

tough times and these things were hard to come by. The boys still had their uniforms and all of those 2 SAT agents' equipment. Come to think of it maybe it was good they hadn't destroyed that HMMWV, with that they had everything they need to play the part of a couple of SAT agents, including experience.

"Now what?" Jack asked.

"They probably won't be back for a while, partner, so how's about we let the boys heal up and grow our crops," Mike suggested.

"Did you notice that they didn't say anything about the Ma Deuces and the Mk-19?" Jack asked.

"I agree that we should move them to new positions just like you were about to suggest," Mike laughed.

"You always did that to me in 'Nam, too," Jack shook his head.

o

"Just wait a few days and you can cut that cast off Ginger," Russell explained. "I didn't use many layers of plaster wrap because it was just a dummy. I'd better go check on Juan. He really should have both of his arms in slings."

"I'm dying of curiosity," Ginger said.

"All right, I'm number 23 and Marty is number 1," Russell explained. "Most of the 26 are people most would never suspect of being involved in a patriot movement. I filled Tom and Juan in a little, so they can answer some of your questions. Very few people know the identities of the 26 of us and it would be better if we keep it that way. Both young men will be healed up by spring. How is Mike doing?"

"He doesn't seem to have any complaints, doctor," she replied. "The tingling is gone and his back is healing nicely. He took one hell of a pounding driving the pickup down around Luke but he was wearing his back brace."

"Is he still taking the pills for his osteoporosis?" Russell asked.

"Shouldn't he be?" she replied.

"You'd better cut the dosage in half, Ginger. I can't prove it but I think it may have contributed to the stenosis," he replied.

o

June 1, 2012, Sedona, Arizona...

“Slow down, Juan, I can’t keep up with you,” Tom panted.

“Let’s take a break,” Juan suggested. “We’ll walk the next quarter mile. How is your leg holding up?”

“No pain, no gain,” Tom winced.

“That’s what I keep telling myself when I’m lifting weights,” Juan replied.

“Are we going to be able to pull this assignment off?” Tom asked.

“How should I know?” Juan asked. “I guess the best we can hope for is that we don’t get killed by some patriots.”

“They brought that HMMWV in and it’s ready to go,” Tom pointed out. “It’s one of the M1114 variants.”

“Let’s jog the rest of the way,” Juan suggested.

o

This new plan came from some patriots back on the east coast. They hadn’t found any way into Mt. Weather and they were putting together a couple of squads of former SAT people in hopes of penetrating the stronghold by subterfuge. Once most people became SAT members they stayed for life. It was a good deal for the mercenaries, 200 grand a year and very little risk. The Colonels had turned Mt. Weather over to FEMA to guard because they were experiencing a lot of desertions. Bird Colonels are Regiment Commanders and it had taken a lot of collusion to pull the coup off. They would probably still be thinking about it if they hadn’t succeeded in getting a Division Commander to go along.

The General couldn’t get any of the other Division Commanders to back his play and he hooked up with the FEMA Wanttabe. The civilian got some of the agency boys he knew from DHS dealings and they eliminated the Division Commanders when the Colonels captured the First Lady and the girls. When they had confronted the President he blew a gasket and ordered their arrest. However, when Bush was presented with Jenna’s pinkie he caved in. He ordered the Joint Chiefs to stand down and the Colonels took over the country. Then the whole thing began to slowly crumble. Older officers and the NCO’s had been the first to desert.

The US has fought its share of wars and has a lot of combat vets who put it all on the line to keep the country safe. So, you take all of those people plus some of the former people who had done a hitch to get college money and you add some older officers and NCO’s to the mix. This gets you a bigger standing Army than the military has. Most of

these folks are armed with hunting rifles or some older weapons but what they lacked in equipment, they more than make up in Spirit.

You then find yourself in the position of having two groups. One is smaller but has the latest equipment and current training. They've been brainwashed into believing that they're fighting for a just cause. Opposing them is the larger group with the inferior equipment but a whole lot of spirit. (Right, that sounds like Iraq. Sorry!) But they have this standoff because the smaller group is holding the nation hostage, literally. And that was where the east coast patriots realized that the key to their success was freeing the President's family. Out of that came the scheme to infiltrate Mt. Weather. It's just your average jigsaw puzzle. Even mountain roads straighten out, eventually.

◦

"We're leaving," Tom announced.

"Do you have everything you need," Ginger asked.

"Mom, that's Teresa's worry not yours," Tom laughed.

"Mothers always worry," Ginger said.

"Piece of cake," Juan reassured her.

◦

And now you know why there is a 2nd Amendment to the Constitution. Many people probably supposed that some President would try to set himself and his cronies as the King and his court. But the founders of the country must have known that life was more uncertain and the 2nd Amendment was necessarily vague. So you take all those opinions of a bunch of liberal judges and stick them where the sun doesn't shine.

"A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 26 – Mt. Weather

Mount Weather is a virtually self-contained facility. Aboveground, scattered across manicured lawns, are about a dozen buildings bristling with antennas and microwave relay systems. An on-site sewage-treatment plant, with a 90,000 gallon-a-day capacity, and two tanks holding 250,000 gallons of water could last some 200 people more than a month; underground ponds hold additional water supplies. Not far from the installation's entry gate are a control tower and a helicopter pad. The mountain's real secrets are not visible at ground level. Warning signs, 10 foot-high chain link fences, razor wire, and armed guards protect the mountain's *real secrets*. Curious motorists and hikers on the Appalachian Trail are relieved of their sketching pads and cameras and sent on their way. Security is tight.

Mount Weather is the self-sustaining underground command center for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The facility is the operational center – the hub – of approximately 100 other Federal Relocation Centers, most of which are concentrated in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina. Together this network of underground facilities constitutes the backbone of America's "Continuity of Government" program. In the event of nuclear war, declaration of martial law, or other national emergency, the President, his cabinet and the rest of the Executive Branch would be "relocated" to Mount Weather.

Mount Weather is not simply a Cold War holdover. Information on command and control strategies during national emergencies has largely been withheld from the American public. Executive Order 11051, signed by President Kennedy on October 2, 1962, states that, *national preparedness must be achieved... as may be required to deal with increases in international tension with limited war, or with general war including attack upon the United States.*

However, Executive Order 11490, drafted by General George A. Lincoln (former director for the Office of Emergency Preparedness) and signed by President Nixon in October 1969, tells a different story. Executive Order 11490, which superseded Kennedy's Executive Order 11051, begins, *Whereas our national security is dependent upon our ability to assure continuity of government, at every level, in any national emergency type situation that might conceivably confront the nation...*

◦

I'll bet I know where Dick Cheney was hiding after 9/11, in the Halliburton Board Room. Heads up boys and girls; anything missing the Halliburton logo probably wasn't supplied by a gen-u-wine US military contractor so it's probably better quality and less expensive. It might even have come from Halliburton's Tehran, Iran office.

◦

"Here's a copy of our orders," the Lieutenant said.

“I don’t have any record of you people being assigned here,” the Major said.

“No problem, sir, we’ll leave,” the Lieutenant replied. “You can take it up with the higher when they contact you.”

“Don’t be hasty Lieutenant,” the Major replied. “I’ll put in a twix and confirm your orders. You get your men housed inside the Mountain.”

◦

Note: A twix is a message not a candy bar, usually sent by Teletype, which is what they used before radio was invented.

Rule Three: Never ass-u-me.

◦

“Ma’am?” Juan said.

“What is it now?” the lady asked.

“We came to get you out of here,” Juan replied.

“Who is we and where are we going?” she said. “What is this, some kind of ruse to shoot us when we try to escape?”

“No ma’am, I’m a Republican,” Juan laughed.

“That’s what they all say until they get in the voting booth,” she replied. “You’ll have to carry the girls, they’re drunk again.”

Every family has its little problems doesn’t it? Both daughters had incidents involving underage drinking. On April 27, 2001 Jenna Bush was charged with being a minor in possession of alcohol in the East Sixth Street entertainment district of Austin. On May 29, 2001 Jenna was charged with trying to use a third party’s identification (fake ID) to purchase alcohol at a popular Mexican restaurant near the University of Texas campus. At the same incident, Barbara Bush was charged with being a minor in possession of alcohol. They both pleaded no contest to all charges. Underage drinking (under 21 years) amongst American college students is illegal but so widespread that detractors of the Bush family rarely raise the issue.

On July 6, 2001, for the false identification charge, Jenna was ordered to pay \$100, perform 36 hours of community service, and attend a session where victims of alcohol-related crimes speak. For the underage drinking charge, Jenna was fined \$500 and her driver’s license was suspended for 30 days.

On July 15, 2004, The (London?) Times reported that “White House aides breathed an almost audible sigh of relief when the girls turned 21 (in 2002) and could buy alcohol legally,” thereby avoiding any further embarrassments to their father.

◦

“Where are you taking us?” she asked.

“Ever heard of Sedona, Arizona, ma’am?” Juan asked.

“Of course, but why there?” she asked.

“It’s the last place anyone would ever think of to look for you,” Juan explained. “There’s nothing in Sedona but some red rocks and tourist traps.”

◦

“They’re out,” the aide said.

“Who’s out?” the President asked.

“Your family was rescued from Mt. Weather, they were taken out west,” the aide replied.

“Where out west?” he asked.

“Think Barry Goldwater.”

“Get me General Myers.”

“He’s on the way.”

“It’s time to kick ass and take names. Where is that .45 that they took off Saddam?”

“The Secret Service hid it.”

“Well, find it and get me some real nasty ammunition to shoot in it.”

◦

When Saddam Hussein was roused from his spider hole in Dawr, a town near Tikrit, by US soldiers, Iraq’s fallen dictator was clutching a pistol. He was now in detention at an undisclosed location, awaiting execution for war atrocities and crimes against humanity. But what ever happened to the pistol? The sidearm had made its way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Sources say that the military had the pistol mounted after the soldiers seized it from Saddam and that it was then presented to the President privately by some

of the troops who played a key role in ferreting out the old tyrant. Though it was widely reported at the time that the pistol was loaded when they grabbed Saddam, Bush has told visitors that the gun was empty – and that it is still empty and safe to touch. “He really liked showing it off,” said a visitor to the White House who had seen the gun. “He was really proud of it.”

The pistol’s new place of residence is in the small study next to the Oval Office where Bush takes select visitors after pointing out better-known White House pieces like the busts of Winston Churchill and Dwight D. Eisenhower and a watercolor called *A Charge to Keep*, which gets its name from a Methodist hymn. The study – the one where Bill Clinton held some of his infamous trysts with White House intern Monica Lewinsky – has become a place where Bush keeps the memorabilia that hold special significance for him. Another of the room’s mementos: a photograph of special-forces soldiers in Afghanistan praying after burying a piece of the World Trade Center there as a tribute to those who died in the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

◦

Federal makes a nice Hydra-Shok 230 grain JHP cartridge for the .45 ACP. Does anyone know what the term kneecapping means? I’ll spare you the graphic details. What’s a yardarm? I know that Clint Eastwood was in a movie called *Hang ‘Em High*. You do know how to hang someone, don’t you? You put the rope around their neck and pull them way up on their tiptoes and tie it off. It sort of gives them a chance to think about the error of their ways. You can always claim that they committed suicide, can’t you? Cruel and unusual only applies in criminal cases when a court has adjudicated you. Kangaroo courts have a different set of rules.

“We have to get you down to Sky Harbor,” Juan explained. “Air Force One is flying in to pick up you and the girls.”

“Why didn’t they fly into Flagstaff (KFLG-2,133m)?” she asked.

“Longer runway?” Juan replied.

Air Force One is a 747-200, tail numbers 28000 and 29000. For that aircraft, the start roll is 3,170 meters and the landing roll 2,121 meters. Sky Harbor Airport’s (KPHX) runways are 3,139m long. The only thing you really have to know is that Air Force One has engines from the 747-400 with maybe 10%-15% more thrust, 26k vs. 23k per engine.

◦

So, our heroes saved the First Lady and the family. What’s that going to get them, the Presidential Medal of Freedom? Or, perhaps some of those one-of-a-kind firearms that the President gets from people? How about a bunch of the M29s?

“Thanks fellas,” the President said.

◦

“Thanks?”

“THANKS? That SOB didn’t even to offer to pay for our fuel,” Juan said.

“No sweat, he’ll mention us in the State of the Union message,” Tom said.

“Like hell he will,” Juan snapped. “He’ll be out of office before the next State of the Union message.”

“We didn’t do it for the glory, Juan,” Tom continued. “We did it because it was the right thing to do.”

Presidents show their gratitude exactly when their Press Secretaries tell them to be grateful. Presidents are capable of a wide-range of emotions including: acceptance, anger, anticipation, anxiety, aversion, contempt, courage, dejection, desire, despair, disgust, distress, expectancy, fear, guilt, happiness, hate, hope, humility, interest, joy, love, panic, rage, sadness, shame, sorrow, surprise, terror and, wonder. All right on cue, just like the reporters they display them to. Gratitude isn’t one of the basic emotions, but you knew that, didn’t you? Who wouldn’t be grateful to get his daughters back even though they were no longer a matched set? Barbara didn’t want to give up her pinkie just so she matched Jenna. I can’t say that I really blame her.

◦

With the President back in the White House there was an election to prepare for. They only had 4 months until the election and the candidates didn’t take time talking about personalities and who did what in which war. The radio stations and TV immediately resumed broadcasting; no doubt the politicians needed to advertise if they were going to have anyone in the country know who they were. John Kerry tossed his hat in the ring because he’d come so close in 2004. The Republicans had a candidate that nobody ever heard of because they didn’t want to waste the support they’d gain by having John Kerry in the job. Kerry talked about disarming America, again, and how that everyone who didn’t want to work was entitled to a chicken in their pots. He also wanted to leave Social Security alone. It wasn’t going to run out money for a long time. He was having a terrible time campaigning because there wasn’t anyone against whom he could sling mud.

“Who are you going to vote for?” Mike wanted to know.

“I’m sitting this one out,” Jack replied.

“It’s your civic duty to vote in elections, Jack,” Mike insisted.

“Let’s go up to Yellowstone and look at the damage,” Jack suggested.

“Are you sure it’s safe?” Mike asked.

“The country is holding an election so it must be back to normal,” Jack answered.

“It doesn’t seem normal, I haven’t heard anyone badmouth anyone else,” Mike reflected.

“What’s to say, Mike?” Jack asked. “We aren’t at war with anyone for a change and who ever heard of the Republican candidate? Kerry is playing it smart and not bringing up the guy’s name. He’ll probably win by a landslide.”

“Maybe I won’t vote either,” Mike finally agreed. “Ok, I’ll talk to Ginger and see if she wants to go to Yellowstone to see the damage.”

The epicenter of the eruption, if that’s the correct term, was at the site of the 1975 Norris 6.1 earthquake. That epicenter was just inside the Midway Geyser Basin and south east of the town of Norris. (Southwest of the town of Canyon Village.) Midway Geyser Basin is mostly within Norris Geyser Basin, which is a large area extending into Idaho. Midway Geyser Basin is also known as the Yellowstone Caldera. Scientists had claimed that there would never be an eruption where it happened. If those scientists were so smart, how come one of them was killed on Mt. St. Helens in 1980?

Norris and Canyon Village were gone, erased by the eruption. So was Madison and anything within the Park that used to be called Yellowstone was either blown away or cooked in the pyroclastic flow. The 4 of them didn’t stay very long because there wasn’t anything to see. As it was, if they hadn’t bought a Hummer, they wouldn’t have gotten within 50 miles of Yellowstone.

“I came, I saw it, let’s go home,” Jack suggested.

“What did you see, Jack?” Mike asked.

“I’m flipped if I know, but it’s the first time I ever saw one,” Jack chuckled.

“Be serious, Jack,” Shelia snapped.

“I am being serious honey,” he replied. “It sort of looks like a moonscape only it doesn’t. There can’t be a single living thing for miles around.”

“There are plants right over there, Jack,” Ginger said.

“I meant animal life, Ginger, plant life is like cockroaches. There’s no way you can kill plants off,” Jack groused.

“Some people claim that when the world ends, the cockroaches will survive,” Mike added.

On the way back they traveled through Denver, Colorado. Denver was just a little over 400 miles (644km) from the site of the eruption. Denver had taken quite a dusting if the marks on the buildings were any indication. Apparently only a few persons had died, probably from dust induced heart attacks or asthma. While asthma attacks are generally triggered by allergies, environment factors can cause them too. Probably people trying to get home and avoid the dust. Volcanic ash is rock that has been pulverized into dust or sand by volcanic activity. In very large eruptions, rocks having the weight and density of hailstones accompany ash. Volcanic ash is hot near the volcano, but it is cool when it falls at greater distances. Ashfall blocks sunlight, reducing visibility and sometimes causing darkness. Ashfall can be accompanied by lightning.

Fresh volcanic ash is gritty, abrasive, sometimes corrosive, and always unpleasant. Although ash is not highly toxic, it can trouble infants, the elderly and those with respiratory ailments. Small ash particles can abrade the front of the eye under windy and ashy conditions. Ash abrades and jams machinery. It contaminates and clogs ventilation, water supplies and drains. Ash also causes electrical short circuits – in transmission lines (especially when wet), in computers, and in microelectronic devices. Power often goes out during and after ashfall. Long-term exposure to wet ash can corrode metal.

Ash accumulates like heavy snowfall, but doesn't melt. The weight of ash can cause roofs to collapse. A one-inch layer of ash weighs 5-10 pounds per square foot when dry, but 10-15 pounds per square foot when wet. Wet ash is slippery. Ash resuspended by wind, and human activity can disrupt lives for months after an eruption. There weren't a lot of people in Denver because they probably bugged out as soon as the ash cloud settled. But like a lot of the people, they were returning. No way was it the good old days, because Yellowstone was history.

o

Kerry handily won the election in 2012 by a 52%-48% margin. The next closest candidate was Ralph Nader. The Republicans still held the House and Senate. Before the eruption, Bush had been dealing with the Chinese situation. Whatever was brewing back in 2006 was still laying around for the new President to deal with. Maybe he could take Saddam's .45 and earn another Purple Heart, or something. Shooting oneself in the foot didn't qualify.

The problem with the Chinese had ended when the Chinese pulled their troops from Taiwan in May of 2006. Their losses were staggering, both in men and in ships. Having seen the nuclear devastation, Beijing opted not to use the nuclear option against the US, at least for then. The Chinese had blinked and lost a lot of face over Taiwan. It took them quite a while to rebuild their Navy. Just before the 2012 election, the Chinese began to prepare for a second attack on Taiwan. The radiation had died down and the remaining Nationalist Chinese had rebuilt their cities. Making Taiwan a part of mainland

China wasn't about the material possessions Taiwan had; now, it was all about saving face. The first time around, China was pushing for unification. This time that motivation almost tasted like vengeance.

China had been producing large quantities of plutonium and converting it into additional nuclear weapons. Those 4 or 5 weapons they used on Taiwan back in 2006 had been replaced 100 times over. Besides, we all know where most of those Minuteman and Peacekeeper missiles were, right? Under a lot of volcanic ash. It didn't really bury the missiles up at the 341 Missile Wing located at Malmstrom, AFB in Great Falls, Montana. Malmstrom AFB had 200 launch facilities. F. E. Warren AFB, Cheyenne, Wyoming lost its 50 Peacekeeper missiles and 150 Minuteman missiles. The other 150 Minuteman missiles were located at Ellsworth AFB, Rapid City, South Dakota. These missiles were buried as deep as those in Cheyenne.

The US Navy still had the 14 Ohio class boats because those Colonels had no intentions of pissing off the Navy. ($14 \times 24 = 336$ missiles) Each missile – either C-4 or D-5 – carries up to eight warheads. D-5 missiles were first intended to carry the 475-kiloton W88 warheads encased in Mark-5 reentry vehicles. But less than 400 of these warheads were manufactured (some sources say the number is 384). These are distributed among several submarines but not mixed with other warheads on the same missile. Most of the warheads carried on Trident-2 missiles are the same as those carried on Trident-1 – that is, 100-kiloton W76 warheads encased in Mark-4 reentry vehicles. Trident-2 missiles could carry 12-14 Mark-4/W76 warheads but they are limited to 8 by the START-1 Treaty. 336×8 (all of the subs were upgraded to carry D-5 missiles, fact, not speculation) = $2,688 + 200 = 2,888$.

18 B-2 Spirit bombers each with 16 1.2MT B83 bombs added another 320 warheads to the mix. Forget the B1B's, because they were at Ellsworth. ($2,888 + 320 = 3,208$) If the Chinese had their act together, they wouldn't go after Taiwan a second time. Gee, I forgot about the 4 SSGN's. Each of those has 22 tubes carrying 7 Tomahawks each ($22 \times 7 = 154 \times 4 = 616$). The W80, designed by Los Alamos, is deployed in air-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles. Approximately 350 nuclear SLCMs were produced, and all remain in storage. NRDC estimates that a total of 400 W80s are currently deployed to arm ALCMs. NRDC also estimates that the W80-1 stockpile includes a total of 1,400 warheads remaining in stockpile associated with the 900 ALCMs that are in storage with their warheads removed. And, that doesn't include the 530 GLCM W84 warheads in storage. $3,208 + 616 = 3,824$ reasons for the Chinese to change their minds. Did you ever wonder why Russia didn't attack the US when it was up to its butt in alligators? Now you know why.

3,824 were ~5 times as many warheads as the Chinese had. The Chinese may be slow, but they aren't stupid. But the Americans were and they elected John Kerry. Now I'm sure that some people must like John Kerry, 52% of the voters voted for him when he was running all but unopposed in the election. Of course the voter turnout was the lowest in modern history... John Kerry gave Americans a hint when he laid out his plans for Iraq. Maybe it's just a faulty memory, but I got the impression that he'd pull out our

troops. And he was a Vietnam War protester along with ol' Hanoi Jane, wasn't he? I can just imagine what the rules of engagement would be under President John Kerry. "You may think about launching a missile or torpedo after your vessel is totally disabled, but you may not use your handguns under any circumstances. Handguns are E-V-I-L." (She may not run, you know.)

Having John Edwards as his running mate during 2004 hadn't help Kerry. He switched horses. Got a fellow Senator from the great state of Connecticut to run with him, Blumenthal.

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"Did you vote for him?" Mike asked.

"I didn't vote," Jack laughed.

"Yeah, I didn't either, so we probably helped get him elected," Mike agreed, laughing.

"Heads up, we have people at the gate," Bob hollered.

"Who is it?" Mike hollered back.

"Suits," Bob answered.

"I'll go see who it is," Jack offered.

"Can I help you?" Jack asked.

"Are there a Juan Cortez and Tom Franklin living here?" one of the men asked, flashing a badge.

"They might be and they might not be; what would you be looking for them for?" Jack replied.

"We came to invite them to a barbeque," the agent answered. "It's being held in Crawford, Texas and they're the honored guests."

"Is it warmer in Texas than it is here in Sedona?" Jack asked.

"Maybe a little," the agent smirked.

"Come in and we'll find the boys," Jack directed.

"Gentlemen, the President would like to express his gratitude for helping rescue his family," the agent explained.

“Better late than never,” Juan replied.

“We came early so you could have time to arrange transportation,” the agent continued. “The celebration is to be held on Saturday, April 6th.”

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Saturday, April 6, 2013, Crawford, Texas...

The former President had quite the gifts for the two men. They consisted of a Winchester model 94, Heritage Limited Edition High Grade, One of One Thousand rifle (.38-55, 26” barrel) and an engraved Colt SAA revolver, 5½” barrel, nickel-plated and ivory gripped in the .45 Colt. He included a holster and belt from El Paso Saddlery with loops for both revolver and rifle cartridges. The former President made a little small talk and moved on to other presentations. Hell, he probably read their names off that 3x5 index card he was holding. Anyway, they got to shake his hand.

“He still didn’t pay for our fuel,” Juan laughed.

“I wonder where we’ll find ammo for the rifles,” Tom seemed puzzled.

There was a case of ammo for each rifle in Mike’s Hummer, which they had borrowed to make the trip. 20 rounds to the box, 10 boxes to the case, loaded by Buffalo Bore. That was when they realized that Bush really was grateful. It isn’t the big things that say, thanks, it’s the small things.

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 27 – Infinite Possibilities

It might have ended right there and they lived happily ever after. As far as Mike's back was concerned it was over, he'd had surgery 3 times. Did I ever mention that bad things come in threes? There had been the Second Korean War. That was bad thing number one. Then Yellowstone had blown its top and some Army Colonel's forgot their oath of office and took over the country during the chaos that followed. These things were all related and in the long view only constituted a single event, number 2. Good things happened in three's also. Jack and Shelia had 3 kids. Juan and Tom were working on number three. They had 9 homes at the ranch and that was the 3x3 rule that said if you didn't have 3, you had 3x3.

Tom and Juan had been part of an operation that rescued the First Lady and the twins. Eventually the former President showed his gratitude and gave the young men some handsome rifles and engraved Colt SAA's. They went home and figured that was the end of it. Yellowstone blowing up had ruined their chances at a college education and Tom had told his foster father, Mike that he was planning on becoming a professional survivalist. Mike and Jack were inseparable and so were Tom and Juan. When Tom's wife, Teresa, Juan's sister, got pregnant a third time, Juan and his wife Selena tried harder and soon Selena was pregnant too. Selena had been named after the singer by the same name, not a horse.

Ginger studied hard and recertified as a Paramedic and everything was going along quite nice in June of 2013. The third bad thing had already happened but the population of the US just didn't know it. In the election of 2012, the Republican Party didn't have a good candidate and a worn out political hack by the name of John Kerry became President.

The boys had gone to Phoenix and Marty had gotten them all the .38-55 ammo they could ever use. They were both working as Coconino County Deputy Sheriff's in the Sedona office. Most everyone at the ranch was a member of the *26 Men Organization* and the exact membership of the organization had never been made public, perhaps to avoid reprisals from the former FEMA employees who were now mostly unemployed thanks to the former President. Bush had done a thorough house cleaning starting with firing the Secretary of DHS for letting the situation over at FEMA get out of hand. There was always some fall guy to take the blame, when necessary.

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With John Kerry in office, the Chinese went ahead and reunified Taiwan because there was no one to stop them. Kerry and Blumenthal completed the power project that had been begun in 2006 and the power grid was permanently protected. They'd never found Osama bin Laden and most of the world had stopped looking. Bin Laden was apparently telling the truth in the speech he'd made back in 2004 because when the US left Iraq, nothing more was heard of him. Under the Colonels, Bush had been forced to get along with everyone and the War on Terror just ended. France started selling reactors to Iran

during the period after the Yellowstone eruption and Iran was now the 8th official nuclear power and the 9th in reality. North Korea was still a wasteland and had lost its status as a country. But, Korea was also reunified.

France had also sold more reactors to the Chinese and by 2013 they were building twice as many nuclear weapons. Their total was 'officially' 800 but it was actually closer to 1,200. For every nuclear device the Chinese built, they built another missile. The US had some catching up to do in many ways. The junta had made certain that the GPS system was maintained but they hadn't launched any new spy satellites during the period they'd been in power. The GOP majority in Congress funded several new surveillance satellites with a high priority. They'd brought the Hubble telescope down years before and without the US assistance, the Russians couldn't maintain the International Space Station. It had slowly dropped from orbit and burnt up in the atmosphere.

There was another Peace Dividend in the offing, but Kerry and Blumenthal couldn't get it through the Republican Congress. Rather than decreasing the Army from 14 to 10 Divisions like the President and Vice President wanted, the GOP passed a new law and appropriated the funds for a 15th Army Division. During that first year in Office, the Executive Department saw the Defense spending rising to about 8% of the GNP. The GNP was down, but in real terms it was 6% of the previous high GNP. Previous spending levels had been less than 4% of the GNP, just to give some perspective.

Gratified with the lack of response from the US when it seized Taiwan, the Chinese seized the disputed Spratly Islands and what used to be called French Indochina. French Indochina consisted of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. While the political definition of Indochina includes only the states of French Indochina, the geographical definition includes Thailand and Burma. It was just a matter of time, in the opinions of many, until the Chinese also seized or attempted to seize Thailand and Burma. If Thailand and Burma fell, how long would it be before Nepal and Bhutan fell to the Chinese? Pakistan had ceded lands to China in 1965 boundary agreement, something that India refused to recognize. One should note that India and Pakistan were/are nuclear powers.

Sad, isn't it? It must have been easy for Patriot Fiction authors to find another disaster or catastrophe to write about. There were additional things needed to finish off the basement shelter that Tom built now that commerce was flowing. KI4U recalibrated everything and they bought one of the package deals plus a CD V-717 and extra dosimeters and Potassium Iodate. That community building was finally finished and they fixed the inside up with 8' folding tables, folding chairs, a large screen TV and some second hand furniture plus a beverage bar.

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"Nice," Mike observed, checking out the community building. "I heard that they may reopen the schools in Sedona next year. Most of the people have moved back to town."

"I'll bet they're wondering where all the things went from Sedona," Jack mused.

“The price of everything just went up,” Mike laughed. “We’re actually going to have to pay for the things we need.”

“Gold is down,” Shelia announced. “They finally reopened the markets and the price is \$750. Ginger and I are going to sell some of our holdings. Silver really dropped and we think that’s where the money should be. We’ll each sell 200 ounces and put some in silver and hold the remaining money.”

“You ladies seem to have a handle on these things,” Mike acknowledged. “No way I’m getting involved in that.”

“Why don’t the 2 of you make up a list of things we need so we are prepared for the next disaster,” Ginger suggested.

“I doubt we’ll get anything from Walton Feed,” Jack said. “They must be buried under several feet of ash.”

“There’s always Bob’s Red Mill Natural Foods up in Oregon,” Ginger pointed out. “They don’t pack the stuff in pails with oxygen absorbers, but we can get pails and pack it ourselves.”

“That’s right, Shelia said, “I can’t believe we actually paid a dollar a pound for flour. We can take some of that money and stock up on wheat and the basic necessities. With the climate changing, we can’t grow wheat anymore.”

“We’re going to need to store the Ma Deuces,” Jack suggested. “We can’t leave those out where anyone or his brother can see them.”

“Just don’t bury them too deep, partner,” Mike advised. “It sounds to me like the world is preparing for another war. China is expanding very rapidly into Southeast Asia and Congress increased the Army to 15 Divisions.”

“They’ll need that Division just to keep the Méxicans in México,” Jack laughed.

“Whatever happened to the Minuteman Project?” Mike asked.

“The Governor finally rescinded the Executive Order and they’re back patrolling that small stretch of the border,” Juan explained.

“I wonder what is going to happen to the *26 Men Organization*,” Tom added.

“She cancelled the authority that made them Arizona Rangers but I suspect that the organization will push to become the new Arizona Defense Force,” Jack answered. “It should be about the biggest state army in the country.”

"It might not be the biggest," Tom suggested, "But it should be the best equipped."

"Are you all convinced that we're going to have another catastrophe or disaster?" Jose asked.

"I sure hope not, Jose," Mike answered. "Nobody expected Yellowstone to blow either. There's also that caldera out in California that could surprise us. We're not going to have to worry about Yellowstone for another 600,000 years but the whole Pacific Rim has been more active for the past 10 years or so. It is almost like the earth is having its last hurrah."

"I don't like what the Chinese are doing. I watch the news too," Jose said.

"Kerry and Blumenthal would never get us in a war," Jack suggested. "They're too busy bitching about American rearming itself."

"I wonder if we should try and disarm that minefield," Jack said.

"Go right ahead Jack," Mike suggested. "But warn me before you do it so I can head for Flagstaff. We could put up signs warning that the area is a minefield, however."

"Yeah, that would be a whole lot safer," Tom agreed. "Then if we need it again, all we'd have to do is take down the signs."

"I agree," Jack said. "We need to get the Hummer's in and get them serviced. Plus we need to shut down those little generators and either get them rebuilt or replace them. There is no such thing as being too prepared."

"That's where you're wrong, Jack," Mike countered. "You can't take food off the table to get prepared. Fortunately for us, we never really had to. You and I had better get started on that list the girls want."

The List:

- Storage foods from Oregon
- Pails & Oxygen absorbers
- Replace/Rebuild portable generators
- Signs (for minefield)
- Additional barrels for Ma Deuces
- Ammo (always)
- Update pharmaceuticals
- Flashlight batteries and bulbs
- Replenish Mountain House foods
- Top off fuel tanks
- Service vehicles

AlpineAire was a division of TyRy, Inc. Mountain House was a division of Oregon Freeze Dry, Inc. TyRy was located in California and the other in Oregon, naturally. The only real difference in the products was the shelf life. AlpineAire claimed a 15-year storage life and Mountain House claimed anywhere from 20-30 years. Both product lines were expensive. Other than that, it was mostly personal preference.

Fuel was more available and they topped off the fuel tanks and returned the 3 vehicles to Ferrellgas up in Flagstaff. They'd put very little mileage on the vehicles and Ferrellgas was just happy to have them back. They also added a new PV array on top of the community building. That PV array pushed them over the top and they probably wouldn't need the 4 small generators, but why take a chance? Out of the blue Dr. Robert Russell retired and asked about acquiring some property from Jack. He put in a basement shelter topped by a Fleetwood mobile home and they now had a major medical facility on the ranch. There was no Mrs. Russell; she'd died in the FEMA camp.

They now had 4 shelters to house 10 families in the event of another disaster. The folks at the ranch had gotten used to using wood stoves, at least those that had them, and they continued to harvest firewood and raise livestock. John and his boys worked his ranch but didn't move back because they had a new home on the ranch and the old ranch held too many memories. Plus, if they moved back, they would need to build 3 houses, not one.

Each political party seemed to have different agendas. The Democrats were worried about Domestic Issues, the Republicans about Foreign Affairs and Ralph Nader was still complaining about everything wrong with the country. He was losing steam because of the geothermal projects that had slowly been replacing fossil fuel and nuclear power generating plants.

Ralph Nader (born February 27, 1934) was an activist attorney who opposed the power of large corporations and had worked for decades on environmental, consumer rights, and pro-democracy issues. Nader had also been a strong critic of recent American foreign policy, which he viewed as corporatist, imperialist, and contrary to fundamental values of democracy and human rights. Nader was the US Presidential candidate of the Green Party in the 1996 election and 2000 election. In both 1996 and 2000, Winona LaDuke was his Vice-Presidential running mate. In 2004, however, the Green Party nominated David Cobb, and Nader ran as an independent candidate in the 2004 US Presidential election. In some states in 2004, Nader achieved ballot access by virtue of winning the nomination of an alternative political party, such as the Reform Party, and in others by forming a Populist Party. His Vice-Presidential running mate in 2004 was Green Party activist Peter Camejo.

Nader had never been married. According to the mandatory financial disclosure report that he filed with the Federal Election Commission in 2000, he then owned more than \$3 million worth of stocks and mutual fund shares; his single largest holding was more than \$1 million worth of stock in Cisco Systems, Inc. Nader's total net worth was between \$4.1 million and \$5 million. However, the consumer advocate had made more

than \$15 million in his lifetime, most of which he had given away. Ralph Nader's lifestyle was unusually austere for an American celebrity (Nader had appeared on the NBC Saturday Night Live television show four times, including hosting the show January 15, 1977). Nader inhabited a modest apartment in Washington DC, equipped with a black-and-white television, which he watched only rarely. His attention was focused on the work of his public interest crusades. Nader had donated the vast bulk of his earnings over his lifetime (from royalties, lectures, legal work, and so forth) to funding public interest causes.

Nader's harsh and uncompromising critiques of corporate and political wrongdoing had earned him a reputation as an angry and gloomy "national scold." Yet, despite this caricature, which no doubt reflected the seriousness and intensity with which Nader approached his work, people well acquainted with Ralph Nader generally spoke of his persistent optimism, his abiding sense of humor, and his unfailing wit. Maybe the public should have voted for Ralph Nader in 2012. Nader had kept Al Gore out of office in 2000, but he hadn't affected the outcome of the 2004 election.

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As of 2014, the nuclear powers in the world were: US, Russia, Great Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Iran (and Israel), one fewer or perhaps unchanged. Conversely, in 2014, there were more available nuclear weapons than there were at any time since the height of the Cold War. Speculation was that the next nuclear confrontation would be between Iran/Israel or India/Pakistan. However, China continued its expansion policies and had seized Thailand, Burma, Nepal and Bhutan. China was knocking on India and Pakistan's doors. Take a look at a map; where else did China have to go? The US strongly protested the Chinese actions in the UN but that was as far as it got. The number of Nuclear Weapons was now: US ~10,640; Russia ~8,600; Great Britain ~200; France ~350; China ~800 (actually 1,200+); India ~125; Pakistan ~150-175; Israel ~250; and, Iran ~15.

The Theater High-Altitude Area Defense [THAAD] system was expected to provide extended coverage for a greater diversity and dispersion of forces and the capability to protect population centers. But the principal additional capability provided by this system was the ability to deal with longer-range theater missile threats as they begin to emerge. THAAD also reduced the number of missiles that the lower-tier systems must engage and provided a shoot-look-shoot capability – the ability to engage incoming missiles more efficiently. With a range of over 200 km and a maximum altitude of 150 km, THAAD was designed to intercept ballistic missiles at long ranges above the atmosphere. THAAD was originally scheduled for deployment in 2011. The first intercept attempt of the THAAD system had taken place in 2005. In July 2004 THAAD testing moved from White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico to the Pacific Missile Range for block 6 and 8 flight tests. Past failures hampered THAAD's test schedule. However, the US had now deployed Patriot PAC-3 systems around the country and had over 1,000 missiles in place in the US and nearly one hundred others in place in Israel.

Even though it was not used by the coalition during Operation Desert Storm, the HAWK missile did see action during the Persian Gulf War. Kuwaiti air defense units equipped with US HAWK anti-aircraft missiles downed about 22 Iraqi aircraft and one combat helicopter during the invasion of 2 August 1990. The HAWK system had undergone several upgrades and was also deployed around the country. Russia had the NATO designated Gazelle and Gorgon ABM systems operational with their 10kt and 1MT (respectively) nuclear warheads. When it came to ABMs, China, India and Pakistan didn't have effective programs.

It should go without saying that whatever the US had for ABM's, the British and Germans had. The big concern in Germany was Theatre ABM's and the British weren't sure which they needed so they had both. Nobody knew what France had, but like Rhett Butler, they didn't give a damn. CNN was carrying reports that both India and Pakistan had stated that if China set one foot on their soil, they would be repelled by every means available. Israel had also developed its own ABM called the Arrow.

Israel's main deterrence against the dangers from a dirty missile attack was its \$2.0 billion Arrow Anti-Ballistic Missile. Its development began in the early 1990s and in 1998 it had its first successful deployment. The Arrow was the world's only first ABM system, which was specifically developed to destroy incoming missiles. The Arrow Missile was a defense system against medium-range ballistic missiles. It could intercept missiles within a wide spectrum of ranges and altitudes, and could provide protection over large areas. Specifically it was designed to intercept medium- and short-range missiles, not intercontinental missiles, in keeping with Israel's perception of its exposure to Iraqi and possibly Iranian missiles. Iran was fielding the Shahab-3, which had the range to strike Israel.

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Ginger and Shelia purchased silver coins and invested the remaining funds in the preparations. Everything on the list Mike and Jack prepared had been acquired before Christmas of 2013. Kerry pushed a bill through Congress forcing the government to go back and pay the previously unpaid COLA adjustments to the pensioners. The little survival community was well prepared on Mike's 66th birthday on January 1, 2014. Ginger took the opportunity to buy Mike some new clothes because he'd lost weight and all of his clothes were pretty baggy. Dr. Russell had checked Mike over and there was no indication that Mike had any health issues. Russell suggested that some people just lost weight, as they got older.

"Well look at you," Jack said. "I wish that I had lost weight instead of getting fatter."

"You haven't gained that much weight," Mike disputed. "My problem is that none of my gun belts fit any longer. How about you and I make a trip to California?"

"What did you have in mind?" Jack asked.

“There’s a guy in Burbank that makes the Paladin Holster,” Mike explained. “At least he used to. I figure that I could buy one of those and put the Laredoan cross draw holster on my new gun belt.”

“Two things to consider,” Jack replied. “One, we’re going to have to take the wives along and two, if we’re in California, we really ought to go to Ventura and pick up a few things.”

“Like what?” Mike asked.

“Remember when John and Bob took out those two SAT guys across the road?” Jack explained. “If I recall correctly, you said that you wished that you had purchased some tomahawks from Cold Steel.”

“I did, didn’t I,” Mike remembered. “I can handle that. Anything else come to mind?”

“Yes, but we’ll have to get those things in Phoenix,” Jack said. “We never did buy suppressors for our M16 rifles. I was talking to Marty and he told me that that flashlight company, Surefire, brought out one hell of a suppressor for the M4 rifle a few years back.”

“I remember,” Mike said. “It was supposed to fire for something like 30,000 rounds. I asked at one time but they weren’t available. It seems to me that they wouldn’t be legal because they wouldn’t be on the NFR. However, I can vouch for the suppressor, that’s what I have on my Super Match.”

“I’m not as touchy as I used to be on the subject of having only registered class 3 weapons,” Jack countered. “Ever since the Colonels’ grabbed the First Family, and we started acquiring less than legal firearms, I could care less.”

“What can you tell me about those suppressors, then?” Mike asked.

“They use some kind of fast attach mount that replaces the flashhider on the M16’s and M4’s,” Jack answered. “I don’t see any reason why we couldn’t take our M16’s and XM-8 rifles down to Phoenix and have Marty install the fast attach mounts on all of our rifles. We can just buy as many of the suppressors as we have money for.”

“Do think he could fit them to the M29s?” Mike asked.

“I’ll call and find out,” Jack suggested. “If he can, I don’t see any reason not to put the mounts on the M29s. We have 12 M16’s, 4 M8’s and 10 of the M29s”

“That’s 26 weapons, right?” Mike asked. “I wonder what it would cost to fix all of them up with suppressors.”

“Probably about 30 grand,” Jack laughed. “We don’t have 26 people living here old enough to shoot fire arms. Let’s limit our spending to 10 grand or less.”

How many people were living on the ranch? Mike and Ginger (2); Jack, Shelia and their 3 kids (5); Jose, Maria and their daughter (3); John and Char (2); Jim and Mary (2); Tom, Teresa and 3 kids (5); Juan, Selena and 3 kids (5); John and Mandy and their 2 kids (4); Bob and Patty and their 2 kids (4); and, Doc Russell and his new girlfriend, the nurse from Flagstaff, named Cindy (2). 34 people made for quite the little community. Jack and Shelia’s twins were born in 1999 and would be 15 in 2014. Their baby was only 1 year younger and Jose and Maria’s daughter was about the same age as Jack and Shelia’s youngest. That would mean that they had 24 people old enough to participate in defending the ranch if it ever got to that again.

Ginger and Shelia overheard Mike and Jack talking and decided that it was only money. Shelia called Marty later and told him to put suppressors on everything and Ginger and she would split the cost. They’d drop the weapons off on the way to California and pick them up when they returned. “The guys could use a little surprise, Marty,” Shelia said. “We haven’t surprised them in quite a while.” Shelia had that right, after a couple has been married a number of years it got harder and harder to surprise each other, especially for Mike and Jack to surprise Ginger and Shelia; the other way around, well... (I’m convinced that women are just naturally sneaky.)

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San Bernardino (AP) Two couples traveling from Arizona to California were killed in an accident around 2:30pm when their Hummer H1 was struck head on by a drunk driver, authorities say. The victims had not been identified pending notification of the next of kin.

Hmm...

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 28 – The Accident

Rule Three: Never ass-u-me.

“What’s the hold up?” Jack asked.

“I have no idea, Jack, maybe there’s an accident,” Mike replied.

“I’m really happy that we don’t live in California anymore,” Jack said. “These drivers are crazy.”

“Oh, look there,” Shelia said, “It’s a Hummer with Arizona plates.”

“It almost looks to me like they never knew what hit them,” Jack observed. “Man I don’t know when I’ve seen two vehicles more damaged.”

“Wrong way driver?” Mike asked.

“It looks like it,” Jack said. “Probably another drunk.”

“What were you two ladies scheming up with Marty back in Phoenix?” Mike changed the subject.

“It’s a surprise,” Ginger answered. “You are just going to have to wait until we get back to Phoenix to find out.”

“Women,” Jack said.

“I hear, you can’t live with ‘em and you can’t live without ‘em,” Mike laughed.

“Ginger, do you dye your hair?” Mike asked.

“What would make you ask a question like that?” she wanted to know.

“Oh, nothing, it’s just that your hair is as red today as it was when we met,” Mike replied. “I made reservations at the Hotel Bonaventure, I hope that’s ok with everyone.”

“Don’t change the subject Michael Hanes,” Ginger said. “Why would you think I dyed my hair?”

“For crying out loud, Ginger, you’ll be 60 years old this year,” Mike replied. “I just thought that you might begin to show a little grey.”

“I don’t have a grey hair on my body,” she replied. “Shelia, when we get back to Sedona, could I get you to frost my hair?”

“What for Ginger?”

“My husband expects me to have grey hair.”

“If you really want me to, sure,” Shelia replied.

“See what you started, Mike?” Jack laughed.

“I’m sorry, please don’t frost your hair,” Mike pleaded.

“Ok, just testing,” Ginger laughed.

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The next day, they drove up to Alfonso’s of Hollywood, which happened to be located in Burbank. (I was there in 1963 with a friend to pick up his new fast draw rig.) When Alfonso brought out the Paladin rig, the price was \$725 for a gun with a 7½” barrel. That was at least 10 years before and the price of silver had increased. They wanted \$875 for the holster in a 7½” barrel now.

“How much would it be for an extra one of those Paladin’s?” Mike asked.

“\$650,” the clerk said. “Want to put it on another holster?”

“Right, I have a Kirkpatrick’s Laredoan and I thought maybe I could use the cross draw holster on this rig,” Mike explained.

“What brand of revolver?” the clerk asked, “Colt?”

“No, Ruger original Vaquero with the 4⅝” barrel,” Mike replied.

“I have the same holster with the Paladin already mounted,” the clerk advised.

“What would that cost me?” Mike asked.

“\$650,” the clerk said.

“Do you mean to tell me that the holster is free?” Mike asked.

“Not exactly, the only way you can get a Paladin is to buy it mounted on a holster,” the clerk explained.

“He’ll take both holsters,” Ginger told the clerk.

“That’s a lot of money for a pair of holsters,” Mike said.

“Look at it as an investment, Mike, if we get desperate, we can always sell the horse heads,” Ginger laughed.

“That’s a genuine ruby in the Paladin’s eye,” the clerk pointed out. “What’s your other gun?”

“7½” Ruger original Vaquero,” Mike replied.

“Let’s see,” the clerk added it up. “That \$875 plus \$650. That’s \$1,525 plus 10¼% sales tax. Your total is \$1,681.31.”

“Ouch,” Mike said. “When did they raise the sales tax to 10¼%?”

“2010,” the clerk replied.

“How much did you pay for the Laredoan?” Jack asked.

“\$335 plus shipping,” Mike replied. “It was interstate so they didn’t charge sales tax.”

“Are you from out of state?” the clerk asked.

“Arizona,” Mike replied.

“If you had ordered by phone, you could have avoided the sales tax,” the clerk pointed out.

“Maybe I’ll just go home and call you back,” Mike suggested.

“If you want me to ship the holsters, I can treat it as a phone order,” the clerk offered.

“How much is the shipping?” Mike asked.

“Ship them,” Ginger said. “Even by Federal Express, it couldn’t be \$156.31.”

“Shipping is free on orders this large,” the clerk laughed.

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It was still early and they could get to Ventura by lunchtime. Mike suggested that they go to Ventura and they could spend the next day shopping in Los Angeles. As expensive as the holsters were, the tomahawks were just the opposite, inexpensive. The problem was trying to figure out which model to buy. Mike should have done the picking on the Internet and just walked in and bought the tomahawks like he bought the boys knives 14-years before. He couldn’t decide between the Vietnam tomahawk and Rifleman’s hawk and the Trail hawk. Big mistake, the ladies saw some of the knives on display and were trying to decide whether they liked the San Mai III Laredo Bowie or the

San Mai III Trail Master. They settled on the San Mai III Laredo Bowie because it had a 1" longer blade and was 0.3 ounces lighter than the San Mai III Trail Master. That made Mike's mind up for him. If they were buying \$600 knives, he was buying the Vietnam Tomahawks. He bought enough for the 4 of them and 2 for Tom and Juan, plus the 2 for John and Bob. He looked at the spears but decided that if the country ever got thrown that far back into the Stone Age, he didn't know if he cared if he lived or died.

Shopping in Los Angeles can be expensive. Especially if you do it on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Jack and Mike stayed at the Bonaventure and let Shelia and Ginger shop by themselves. The stretch of shops and boutiques on Rodeo Drive is only three blocks long. It begins at Wilshire Boulevard on the south, and runs north to Santa Monica Boulevard, where the commercial section of the street gives way to an affluent residential neighborhood. But those three short blocks constitute the most famous shopping district in America, and probably the most expensive three blocks of shops in the world. It is here that the rich & famous do their shopping, and where tourists window-shop while trying to spot movie stars on the fabled street.

The most celebrated clothing designers in the world have boutiques here: Armani, Gucci, Christian Dior, Coco Chanel, Ralph Lauren, Valentino... The jewelry stores boast names like Cartier and Tiffany. Other nearby stores include I. Magnin, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Yves Saint Laurent, & Pierre Deux. In fact, Rodeo Drive is home to the single most expensive store in the world: Bijan (at 420 Rodeo Drive). You must make an appointment in advance just to shop at Bijan (which was named after its Iranian owner). On a typical visit, Bijan's average customer spends in the neighborhood of \$100,000 on men's fashions, which range from a \$50 pair of socks to \$15,000 suits. The ladies did what all of the tourists do, window-shopped.

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Remember *Pretty Woman* when Julia Roberts went into the store on Rodeo Drive? Pretty accurate portrayal of how it really is. Christopher Reeve was originally considered for the Edward Lewis role. Molly Ringwald was originally offered the role of Vivian but turned it down. Disney didn't want Julia Roberts for the role of Vivian; instead they wanted Meg Ryan. At \$178,406,000, *Pretty Woman* was the second highest grossing film of Robert's career. The Highest was *Ocean's Eleven* at \$183,405,771. The highest grossing movie that Richard Gere ever starred in was *Pretty Woman*. *Chicago* was next at \$170,684,505. After George Clooney and Brad Pitt found out that she was going to be joining them in *Ocean's Eleven*, they sent her a card that read, "We heard that you get 20 per film" and in it was a \$20 bill; the joke was that she reportedly gets \$20 million per film. Fans clamored for years for a sequel to *Pretty Woman*, or at least another pairing of Julia and Richard. We fans got our wish with *Runaway Bride*, which was a runaway success at \$152,149,000. Fans voted *Pretty Woman* as Julia Roberts's best movie so far as an actress, with 28% of the vote. *Erin Brockovich* came in second with 22% of the vote. (34B-23-34, if you're interested)

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“You didn’t buy anything?” Mike asked.

“Why pay \$200 for a pair of Wranglers?” Ginger scoffed. “We saw Julia Roberts.”

“Really?” Jack perked up.

“Down boy,” Shelia laughed. “She’s cute but not really pretty. And, she’s positively flat-chested.” Meow.

“Oh,” Jack mumbled, clearly disappointed.

Christopher Reeve and Molly Ringwald, huh? That would have been a real winner. Molly (34C-24-33) turned down the Julia Roberts role in *Pretty Woman* and the Demi Moore role in *Ghost*. She also refused the Lea Thompson role in *Some Kind of Wonderful*.

The following day, they packed up and headed back to Sedona. Didn’t get killed on the return trip either. On the way home, they passed by the Barstow Marine Corps Depot, a pleasant memory.

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The US Air Force dug out the 150 missiles in South Dakota and the 200 missiles in Cheyenne, raising the warhead count from 3,840 to $(150+150+ 500) = 4,640$. START II required the deactivation of the Peacekeeper Missiles and the de-MIRV’ing of the Minuteman missiles. They started with the Peacekeepers back in 2002 but never quite got finished. They did de-MIVR the Minuteman III missiles, however. It would have gone better if Putin had supported Bush’s Operation Iraqi Freedom. If you are knowledgeable on the US ICBM’s, and have searched the Internet, you’ll find that my total is pretty close to the total published on the web.

In 1945, it only took 2 ~15kt atomic bombs to bring Japan to its knees. China invaded India and Pakistan. The Indians and Pakistanis let all 300 of their missiles fly. In Beijing, the order was given to retaliate against India and Pakistan. In the ensuing confusion, China let all 1,200 of its missiles fly at whatever they were aimed at. And you thought the sun didn’t shine after the eruption of Yellowstone. China launched 300 missiles against India and Pakistan, combined. They launched 450 each at Russia and the US. They decided it wouldn’t be kosher to launch against Israel.

How can you joke at a time like this? 1,200 missiles were flying from China to destroy much of the known world. Crying would change things? EAS gave out the warning that the United States Air Force had confirmed that it had 450 inbound missiles. Duck and cover! Right, that desk they gave you in school is the perfect cover against an ICBM. Kerry and Blumenthal were very perplexed; they’d done everything except invite the UN in to avoid trouble.

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This is a special access program. Includes costs specifically identified and measurable to special classified projects for which information on resources will be provided only on a “need to know” basis to authorized personnel identified on a special access list. Excludes civilian and military manpower and their related costs and military construction costs which are included in appropriate management, and support elements in this program.

It is believed that this program funds work on the use of space-based electro-optical sensors for measurements and signatures intelligence (MASINT) multiple mission support for detection and characterization of adversary ballistic missiles and directed energy weapons systems tests. This unacknowledged satellite program appears to involve a dedicated spacecraft, similar in configuration to the Defense Support Program Multiple Orbit Spacecraft (DSP-MOS), launched into a highly inclined semi-synchronous orbit.

With the heightening of tensions in India and Pakistan, the US military had gone first to DEFCON 4 and finally DEFCON 3. DHS had raised the Threat Level to Orange. Immediately upon detection of the launches from India and Pakistan, the US moved to DEFCON 2 and issued flash orders for an emergency sortie of the fleets. When the launches were detected from China, everyone held his or her breath. When the missile tracks were confirmed moments later, the US went to DEFCON 1 and the President was asked to issue the PAL codes. Kerry relented and issued the codes. The briefcase didn't even look like a football.

The Football is a secure briefcase that contains the information needed to enable the President to authorize and initiate a nuclear weapons strike. It follows the President wherever he goes and is never more than a few steps from his side. A military officer carries the Football and undergoes the nation's most rigorous security background check, “Yankee White”. The contents of the Football are believed to include:

- The “black book” of nuclear weapons launch options as formulated in the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP). The current SIOP is SIOP 04.
- The Emergency Action Message (EAM) or “go codes” needed to authorize use of nuclear weapons;
- A booklet on “Emergency Procedures White House” outlining secure locations to which the President could be directed and describing use of the Emergency Broadcast System;
- A secure telephone.

The concept of the football came about in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. President Kennedy was concerned that some Soviet commander in Cuba might launch their missiles without authorization from Moscow. After the crisis, Kennedy ordered a review of the US Nuclear Command and Control system. The result was the highly classified National Security Action Memorandum that created the Football.

Minimal deterrence involves the ability to respond to a nuclear attack with a minimal nuclear counterstrike. In contrast to mutual assured destruction, the counterstrike would not have the ability to destroy the attacker, but rather is intended to severely damage the attacker in order to deter an attack. It appears to be the nuclear posture that the People's Republic of China maintains toward the United States as well as the nuclear policy of India and Pakistan. Right.

During the Cold War the USSR invested in extensive protected civilian infrastructure such as large nuclear proof bunkers and non-perishable food stores. In the US, by comparison, little to no preparations were made for civilians at all, except for the occasional backyard fallout shelter built by private individuals. This was part of a deliberate strategy on the Americans' part that stressed the difference between first and second strike strategies. By leaving their population largely exposed, this gave the impression that the US had no intention of launching a first strike nuclear war, as their cities would clearly be obliterated in the retaliation.

The system the Navy has in place to control the launch of the Trident D-5 missiles is simple. At the first sign of confirmed trouble an automatic order is issued to launch the Trident missiles. The order can be to launch immediately or wait 6 hours. If that order hasn't been rescinded within 6 hours, the missiles fly. The procedure is called Fail Deadly. At 5 hours and 50 minutes Mt. Weather rescinded the order. However, 5 hours and 10 minutes earlier, the United States wasn't so lucky. Over a period of several minutes the Chinese missiles arrived. Many were targeted for the missile silos in Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota. Many weren't. Phoenix was hit, Flagstaff wasn't. Why waste a whole nuclear weapon on 50,000 people? I wonder if they're having a fire sale on Rodeo Drive. The suits are marked down to \$14,999.99.

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Tom and Juan hadn't left for the office. They got the news of the incoming missiles and got their families into Tom's shelter. Ginger, Shelia, Jack and Mike were still on the road coming home from Los Angeles. A hummer can't go like a bat out of hell no matter how hard you push it. To get to Sedona, you take the I-17 to the state route 89 exit near the airport. A few miles south on 89, you come to a Gordian Knot where you only move south ½ mile in more than 2 miles of driving. From there the road winds its way to Sedona and the ranch 4 miles south. The 4 seniors saw the sky light up far to the south. They turned on the radio to get some news but all they got was the EAS tone.

"Shit," Mike said.

"Was that what I think that was?" Jack asked.

"I'm not sure, but that was the EAS tone on the radio," Mike replied, turning off the radio.

"How long until we get home?" Ginger asked.

“20 minutes,” Mike replied. “We should have plenty of time, Ginger.”

“We have a whole lifetime, partner,” Jack responded.

Back when missiles weren't so accurate, the position of the military was to attack the cities instead of the military installations of the enemy. There were three reasons for the philosophy: one, the inability to deliver a missile on an exact target (CEP); two: MAD; and, three it indicated that you weren't intending to make a First Strike. Times change and so do policies. The George W. Bush administration approached Russia with the idea of moving away from MAD to a different nuclear policy of total weaponry escalation. Russia has thus far been unreceptive to these approaches largely out of fear that a different defense posture would be more advantageous to the United States than to Russia. Nevertheless, the Bush administration changed the US nuclear policy.

In the year 2014, no country could make a first strike and not experience a full retaliation. In fact under the Fail Deadly Doctrine, they could expect to get as good as they gave and much more. Why had the Chinese attacked the US, sour grapes? Does it matter? While the Chinese attack on India and Pakistan could be seen as retaliation, the attack on the US and Russia was a First Strike, plain and simple. From now on, if you want Chinese food, you'll have to go to the US and a whole lot of those restaurants are closed for remodeling.

Maybe if Russia had attacked the US, Flagstaff might have taken a hit. The Chinese sent the 300 most accurate missiles after military targets. The older, less accurate missiles were sent at the largest cities. They hit: New York City (8,084,316), Los Angeles (3,798,981), Chicago (2,886,251), Houston (2,009,834), Philadelphia (1,492,231), Phoenix (1,371,960), San Diego (1,259,532), Dallas (1,211,467), San Antonio (1,194,222), Detroit (925,051), San Jose (900,443), Indianapolis (783,612), San Francisco (764,049), Columbus (725,228), Austin (671,873), Baltimore (638,614), Milwaukee (590,895), Boston (589,281), Washington DC (570,898), El Paso (577,415), Seattle (570,426), Denver (560,415), Charlotte (580,597), Fort Worth (567,516), Portland (539,438), Oklahoma City (519,034), Tucson (503,151), New Orleans (473,681), Las Vegas (508,604), Cleveland (467,851), Long Beach (472,412), Albuquerque (463,874), Kansas City (443,471), Fresno (445,227), Virginia Beach (433,934), Atlanta (424,868), Sacramento (435,245), Oakland (402,777), Mesa (426,841), Tulsa (391,908), Omaha (399,357), Minneapolis (375,635), Honolulu (378,155), Colorado Springs (371,182), St. Louis (338,353), Wichita (355,126), Santa Ana (343,413), Pittsburgh (327,898), Arlington (349,944), Cincinnati (323,885), Anaheim (332,642), Toledo (309,106), Buffalo (287,698), St. Paul (284,037), Corpus Christi (278,520), Aurora (286,028), Raleigh (306,944), Newark (277,000), Lexington-Fayette (263,618), Anchorage (268,983), Louisville (251,399), Riverside (274,226) Bakersfield (260,969) and Stockton (262,835). Did I miss anybody? All of those cities have one thing in common, populations greater than ¼ million. Dang, that's a lot of people; 48,184,376 million to be exact. Maybe they didn't all die.

Rule Four: Live in a small town far away from military installations and not downwind of any large cities.

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“Why are you in the shelter?” Mike asked.

“The EAS said that we were being attacked,” Tom replied.

“They hit Phoenix a couple of times but they didn’t hit Flagstaff,” Mike explained. “Give me the survey meter and I’ll check the radiation level.”

“How do you know they hit Phoenix?” Tom asked.

“Well, maybe they didn’t and the sun changed locations,” Mike replied sarcastically. “This thing isn’t even registering. I think it’s safe to come out for the moment.”

“How bad is it around the country?” Juan asked.

“All Mike could get on the radio was the EAS tone,” Jack replied. “We really don’t have any idea. Tell us what they said on the radio or TV.”

“All they said was that the United States was under attack from China,” Juan mumbled.

“That figures,” Mike said. “Dimes to donuts the Chinese pushed into Pakistan and India. Both countries said they’d respond to China using all means. I wouldn’t put it past China to hit everyone. Let’s face it; Pakistan and India had about 300 nuclear weapons according to CNN. If they attacked China, China would be smashed flat. The Chinese wouldn’t have anything to lose if that happened.”

“I never thought of that, Mike,” Jack said. “They wouldn’t have anything to lose. We’ll probably still have to get in the shelters, you know. We’ll probably get fallout from California.”

“Probably, but we can at least take the time to move the freezers, empty the refrigerators and empty the pantries into the shelters.” Mike suggested. “We can pass out the presents we bought. Say Tom, did I get a Federal Express package?”

“I put it in the house,” Tom replied.

“Good, we might end up selling the silver Paladins,” Mike smiled.

“Did you get those Paladin holsters?” Tom asked. “Expensive?”

“If you have to ask the price, you can’t afford it Tom,” Mike replied. “You’re darn right they were expensive. They cost Ginger over \$1,500.”

“Can I have the Laredoan holsters?” Tom asked.

“They don’t fit me anymore,” Mike said. “But I thought you only had 5½” barreled Colts.”

“I figured that money would be no object, so I bought some used Colts. Beginning a Deputy has its advantages.” Tom smiled.

“God, I hope Marty made it out of Phoenix,” Jack said.

“If he did, he’ll probably show up here,” Mike replied. “How long do you figure before we hit the shelters?”

“About a day, it depends on the wind,” Jack responded. “If Marty is coming, he should be here in a couple of hours.”

“Well don’t everyone stand around, let’s get the stuff moved to the shelters,” Mike insisted.

“I said we have a day, Mike,” Jack mentioned.

“Which way is the wind from?” Mike asked.

“The south,” Jack looked at the weather vane.

“Well...”

“Darn,” Jack said. “Hurry up, everybody.”

Marty came screaming in just as they were about to close the shelters. He got them to empty his trunk and then he joined #23 and his new girlfriend in their shelter. Marty only had time to bring their rifles. As it was, he barely cleared Phoenix before the first warhead hit Mesa. He was just short of Agua Fria National Monument on I-17, going 100mph when the first warhead detonated. The new 71,100-acre Agua Fria National Monument contains one of the most significant systems of late prehistoric sites in the American Southwest. Its ancient ruins offer insights into the lives of those who long ago inhabited this part of the desert southwest. The monument is located in central Arizona approximately forty miles north of central Phoenix. The monument encompasses two mesas – Perry Mesa and the adjacent, smaller Black Mesa – the public land to the north of these mesas, and the canyon of the Agua Fria River. Elevations range from 600 feet above sea level along the Agua Fria Canyon to about 4,300 feet in the northern hills. It’s the town mentioned in *Big Iron*.

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 29 – After

“Could you see anything behind you?” Mike asked Marty over the intercom.

“I never looked back,” Marty replied. “I was going too fast to take my eyes off the road.”

“It looked like we were going to get dusted by the fallout from Phoenix,” Mike said. “My remote weather station indicates the wind has shifted to the south. Did you have much traffic?”

“It was pretty lonely stretch of highway, Mike,” Marty replied. “If it hadn’t have been I might not have made it here in time.”

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On April 4, 2005, exactly two years after Army Sgt 1st Class Paul Ray Smith’s death, President Bush awarded him the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest honor for valor. It is only the third Medal of Honor given for actions since the Vietnam War, and the first from the Iraq war. The other two post-Vietnam Medals of Honor went to Army Master Sgt. Gary I. Gordon and Army Sgt. 1st Class Randall D. Shughart, two Delta Force troopers who died defending the crew of a helicopter that was shot down in Mogadishu, Somalia, in events depicted in the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*. More than 3,400 Medals of Honor have been awarded since the decoration was created in 1861, of which more than 600 have been given posthumously. Smith’s widow, Birgit, decided that the couple’s 11-year-old son, David, would accept the medal on his father’s behalf. *Sgt. 1st Class Smith’s actions saved the lives of at least 100 soldiers* according to an Army narrative.

◦

They stayed in the shelters as the radiation rose, fell and rose again. The initial rise they attributed to the Phoenix fallout and the rise about a day later to the fallout from California. Phoenix is about 450 miles east of LA and Sedona is about 410 miles due east (92.7° true) from Bakersfield. Sedona is about 470 miles southeast of Fresno (104.1° true). Forecasts predict that their area would get fallout from both Fresno and Bakersfield. With an average wind velocity of 11 miles per hour, the radiation began to rise about 37 hours after they saw the flash from the Phoenix area. It continued to rise for about 72 hours and then leveled off. A few hours later, it started to slowly fall as the radiation decayed. At that point, they started counting the 343 hours under the 7-10 Rule. They had CD V-717’s so they could monitor the outside radiation but the countdown essentially let them know what to expect. They had managed to get the livestock into the barns, but they had no idea if the livestock would survive.

Fallout may be dangerous to cattle, sheep, horses, pigs, and other livestock as well as to human beings. Radioactive materials in fresh fallout can contaminate the immediate environment and give off rays that can penetrate deep into the body. This is the major

source of danger for livestock. Animals can also suffer skin burns if fallout settles in the coat. Skin burns could produce considerable discomfort, but would not endanger the lives of the animals. Animals are about as sensitive to radiation damage as human beings; to survive, animals need the same protection as human beings.

When livestock must graze on fallout-contaminated pasture, supplemental feeding from non-contaminated forage can materially reduce the daily dose of radioactive material the animals will eat. Stored or stacked hay, ensilage from either silo or trench, and stored grain are safe supplemental feeds when they are protected from fallout contamination. When no shelter is available and when the level of radiation is only moderate, or food resources are scant, growers should, if possible, supply supplemental feeding and limit the grazing time. When meat and dairy animals eat contaminated feed, some radioactive elements are absorbed into their bodies. Thus, man's food supply of animal products can become contaminated with radioactivity.

Livestock housed in barns and other farm buildings during fallout have a better chance of surviving effects of radiation than those that are not sheltered. A reasonably well-built shelter reduces intensity of external radiation and prevents fallout from settling on the animals' bodies. It also prevents animals from eating contaminated feed.

The best way to protect livestock from fallout is to move them indoors as soon as possible. If you do not have adequate facilities to house all animals, put some of them near farm buildings or in a small dry lot. Under these conditions the amount of space per animal in a barn should be reduced to the point of overcrowding. The limiting factor is ventilation and not space. The advantage is that the animals tend to shield each other enough that more will survive under crowded conditions than under normal housing. Large, protected self-feeders and automatic livestock waterers can supply uncontaminated feed and water.

The radiation level only got to 300R/hr or so. They didn't graze the animals from the fields so there would be no danger from residual radiation absorbed by the plants. 300R/hr in a human is on the cusp of being lethal. They could only hope that the barn provided a little shielding, it wouldn't take very much. Their livestock consisted of chickens, hogs, horses and cattle in decreasing numbers. Dr. Russell was on the intercom suggesting that if the radiation didn't get any higher there was a good chance most of the livestock would survive. But Russell was a people doctor, not a veterinarian. It didn't make much difference either way; they weren't going to leave the shelter until it was safe to do so. They could only hope that they had put down enough hay for the cattle, horses and hogs. The automatic water tanks were fed from the well in Mike's basement so the cattle had clean water. The reason the dogs aren't discussed was because both dogs had passed on in 2012 at 14 years of age.

At 7 hours from when they started counting, the radiation level was 30R/hr. At 49 hours after they started counting, it was 3R/hr. At 343 hours, it was 300mR/hr. At 100 days the exposure level was 0.30mR/hr. After that they could safely leave the shelter permanently.

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After 18 days in the shelter, they started taking the Potassium Iodide/Iodate and left the shelter to tend to the livestock. The animals seemed relieved to be out of the tight quarters. Those bales of hay stacked inside the barn must have shielded the animals because none seemed to be very ill. Dr. Russell started a log to record their accumulated radiation. One thing they couldn't do was use the milk or the eggs for a period of time, especially the milk. However, it would have been a whole lot worse if they were feeding the cattle on range grass instead of baled hay.

"It doesn't look too bad," Jack said.

"Radiation is a little like high blood pressure, Jack. Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it won't kill you," Mike pointed out. "We're going to need to get the hose and wash down any hot spots we might find. Other than that, I think we should just leave the fallout alone and let it decay."

"Maybe we should have bought radiation suits or something," Jack wondered aloud.

"I checked them out," Mike announced. "A really good one would run about \$700 and up. I didn't see the point in getting the suits, that's why we have the shelters. A radiation suit would only be useful if we had to go into a contaminated area. We have the survey meters and on the lowest setting we know if we have a hot spot. The cheap ones are nothing more than a plastic rain suit with a gas mask anyway. I'd rather spend the money on food or guns and ammo."

"I was afraid we'd seen the last of our rifles," Jack shook his head. "I wonder what possessed Marty to bring the rifles and come up here."

"Maybe because Doc Russell is here or maybe because we're his best customers," Mike suggested.

"I'm glad he's here," Jack said. "I wonder what he had to leave in Phoenix."

"I asked him that and he told me that all of his weapons are put away at night in locked cabinets. So if we wait a while we might be able to go down to Phoenix and recover his inventory."

"Did he say anything about what he had on hand?" Jack continued.

"He said he'd gotten 2,000 rounds of that M1018 HEAB ammo and 2 pallets of Lake City M995 overruns. I'm not sure if he said anything about 7.62 or Garand ammo, but he probably carries that all of the time."

“When do you want to run down to Phoenix?” Jack asked. “I say sooner before someone ransacks his store, but maybe later because of the radiation.”

“The same 7-10 Rule applies in Phoenix as it does here, Jack,” Mike said. “Go ask Marty when he wants to make the trip. Did anyone think to inventory our fuel?”

“We were topped off last month, partner, we couldn’t have used very much.”

“With the stuff we got from that fella up in Oregon, we’re good to go on food for at least a couple of years. I’ll have to ask the girls what they did on filling in the Mountain House stuff,” Mike noted.

“I know we didn’t get the signs for that minefield,” Jack replied. “We got the Oregon food and packed it in the 6 gallons pails with oxygen absorbers. We rebuilt the generators, bought more ammo, and topped off the fuel.”

“Ginger updated the drugs and we got the Mountain House stuff, but like I said, I don’t know how much.”

“Flashlight batteries and bulbs?” Jack asked.

“Dozens.”

“Spare Ma Deuce barrels?”

“That we didn’t get, maybe Marty has some or knows where we can get some,” Mike suggested.

“If we bring back his ammo, we’ll have that covered for a couple of lifetimes,” Jack pointed out.

“Hey Marty, we were just talking about you, got a minute?” Mike flagged Marty down.

“What can I do for you?” Marty asked.

“Do you have or can you get replacement barrels for the Ma Deuces?” Jack asked.

“I’ve got the barrels,” Marty replied.

“How many barrels?”

“Maybe a dozen.”

“We’ll take them,” Jack said. “When do you want to go to Phoenix and recover your inventory?”

“Do you think it’s safe?”

“Mike said it’s the same 7-10 Rule so I think we’d be okay. Could we clear out your shop in under 8 hours?”

“If I still have a shop I don’t see why not,” Marty said. “We could just load up everything and sort it out when we get back up here. I’m not imposing? You have plenty of food and everything?”

“Not counting you we had 34 people at last count with 24 of the 34 old enough to defend the ranch. An old jarhead like you can only improve things. You know exactly what we have for rifles, not counting the .22’s and Ginger’s old AR-15. Plus we have some shot-guns; you sold us some of them. Did you have any trouble mounting the fast attach mount on the rifles?”

“No, by the way, the girls’ owe me for 26 of those M4-FA suppressors,” Marty replied.

“So that’s what the surprise was,” Mike laughed. “How much 7.62 do you have?”

“A bunch from Black Hills ammo and some surplus. Plus a few cases of the Garand ammo but it’s not in the clips.”

“That isn’t any problem John and his boys save the clips,” Jack smiled.

“If you’re sure it’s safe we could go to Phoenix in a couple of more days,” Marty relented.

“Will everything fit in a pickup and a trailer?”

“No way, it will take all of your pickups and your trailer,” Marty said. “I was running a pretty successful business.”

“We can buy some of that ammo and the .50 cal barrels,” Jack said.

“I don’t need the money, I need a place to stay, can we work something out?” Marty asked

“Oh hell yes,” Mike said. “But we’ll still pay for the barrel and some of the 25mm.”

“Then we leave bright and early the day after tomorrow,” Marty said. “Does everyone have body armor and are there enough of those M-29s?”

“You’ve seen what we have,” Mike said. “We have 10 of them.”

“How many people did you say?” Marty asked.

“35 counting you.”

“I have more of the M-29s we can use when we get there,” Marty announced.

“Just how do you manage to get the latest of everything?” Jack wanted to know.

“I had an extensive network of supply Sergeants who seem to be very careless,” Marty laughed. “Hell, they’re always losing something. I’d guess that’s probably over. I have 10 of the M-29s and with the M-8s you have everyone will have the latest weapons.”

“What about you?” Mike asked. “That would leave us one short on the weapons.”

“I’m partial to my Italian BM-59,” Marty said. “Besides, I have lung cancer and probably won’t live much longer. All the more reason to get my things up here.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Mike said. “I didn’t know you smoked.”

“I don’t, never have,” Marty replied. “C’est la vie. So you see, I don’t really need your money. I won’t need it wherever I’m going in the afterlife.”

They let the conversation wane, not wishing to intrude on Marty’s personal affairs. They decided to take 5 pickups, the trailer and 10 people, plus Marty, to Phoenix. They most certainly weren’t looking forward to this trip. There was no telling what they might be up against when they got to Phoenix. The city would be filled with the dead and dying, of that they were certain. However they were concerned that some of those gangs might have survived and could present a threat. Marty’s business was far off the beaten path in Buckeye, to the west of Phoenix. It seemed possible that it could still be standing despite the nuclear warheads.

Two days later the 10 people and Marty headed to Phoenix and Buckeye. They picked up 101 and skirted the Phoenix area as best they could. The Chinese warhead must have been targeted on the Arizona Capitol Building. Most of Phoenix was utterly devastated. They saw very few people on the trip. The eleven people made short work of loading Marty’s business on the trailer and pickups and they were back in Sedona 7 hours after they left. Jim had thrown together some stake sides for the pickup boxes and they were filled to the point of overflowing. It took them well into the night to divide everything among the shelters and get it secured.

Marty spent a few days matching the barrels to the Ma Deuces. Each of the four machineguns now had 4 spare barrels. Marty pre-set the headspace one barrel at a time, turning it all the way in, backing it out until it was correct and writing the number of clicks out and the ID number for the Ma Deuce. They’d picked up a little extra radiation and they were well over their day limit. They stayed inside for the next few days until Dr. Russell told them that they were back on schedule. During the down time, they discussed what came next.

"It's too late to plant this year," John pointed out. "I could probably get a cutting of alfalfa, but that's about it."

"You might be better off waiting on that John," Dr. Russell said. "The longer you can wait to plant the animal feed, the better off we'll be. I understand you planted gardens during the trouble when Yellowstone blew."

"We planted alfalfa, corn, wheat and a large garden," Ginger said. "We have plenty of canning jars and lids and can probably get more lids in Sedona or Flagstaff."

"What's the security situation?" Marty asked.

"We have the mesh fence to begin with, Marty," Jack answered. "Stay the hell out of that area between the cyclone fence and the pig wire, it's a minefield filled with Bouncing Betty's. We can cover the front fence with flamethrowers, the 4 Ma Deuces and the Mk-19. It would be mighty tough for someone to get through from the front plus the cyclone fence encloses all 80 acres. We have closed circuit TV cameras mounted on Mike's radio tower and we can watch the entire acreage on camera."

"Juan and I are going to take a run into Sedona and see how the residents are making out," Tom announced. "We'll be back in a few hours."

Sedona had gotten organized and most of the town had made it through the fallout. They had barricades on the highways leading north and south out of town. Essential services were running and they organized all of the food in the town at the High School. The Mayor was estimating that they had enough food for about 6 months and with rationing, 9 months. Tom and Juan went the rest of the way into Flagstaff and checked in with the Sheriff. The Sheriff and what remained of the *26 Men Organization* had the situation in Flagstaff well in hand. Roadblocks were set up on east and west I-40 and the 89 and 180 north and I-17 south were also covered. Flagstaff was estimating that they had 4 months' worth of food and maybe 6 months' worth with rationing. The Sheriff told Tom and Juan to cover 89 and 179 south and west of Sedona and make certain that marauding gangs that would turn up sooner or later didn't attack Sedona.

They still had radio and TV. Radio wasn't carrying much news and most of it was local. TV was primarily movies and reruns with local news. Not surprisingly, neither was getting network feeds. The EAS was up and running but FEMA was still getting organized to deal with the attack. There was more that needed done than they had resources. President Kerry had activated what remained of the state National Guards and was going to be up to many of the states to provide their own security. The *26 Men Organization* had managed to get an Executive Order from the Governor appointing them as the interim Arizona Defense Force until the Arizona Legislature passed a law. A substantial portion of the organizations members had been based in Phoenix.

"Any estimates on the death toll?" Jack asked.

“We aren’t even sure which cities were hit, quite yet,” Mike replied. “It has to be high and whatever it is, I imagine it will double or triple before this thing is over.”

“Any news on what happened?”

“China attacked India, Pakistan, the US and Russia,” Mike replied. “That’s about all we know except that there probably isn’t a China anymore. India and Pakistan started it when China entered their countries.”

“If you think we had it tough when Yellowstone blew up, you haven’t seen anything yet,” Jack pointed out. “You should have bought those spears.”

“Why?”

“Oh, nothing really, just something Einstein said,” Jack answered.

“Tom and Juan put up some of those concrete traffic barriers on west 89 and south 179 and they’re staggered so people can get through but only at very slow speeds,” Mike mentioned. “We never got a second hoard of MZB’s so I suppose we can expect them this time once the food runs short again.”

“You would think that one disaster in a lifetime would be enough,” Jack said. “Unless of course you live in Florida. They get them every hurricane season. We’ve had two national disasters in 7 years. Enough already!”

“We could move back to California and have a major earthquake every few years,” Mike laughed.

“Thanks, but no thanks, partner,” Jack said. “But I still think you should have bought the spears.”

◦

Friday, August 1, 2014, Sedona, Arizona...

Marty died from his lung cancer. He had spent his last 4 days in the clinic Dr. Russell had set up in his basement. Marty left a handwritten will leaving everything to the ranch corporation. He was entitled to a military funeral but that was back in normal times. Jim built a wooden coffin and they buried Marty in an area behind the community building and designated it as their cemetery. They didn’t know it but Marty was only the first of many that would occupy the cemetery sooner rather than later. The *26 Men Organization* had lost its founding member. However, there really wasn’t much of the organization left anymore. In their area of Arizona, just some people in Flagstaff, Sedona and Prescott. Not surprisingly several members of the Coconino County Sheriff’s Department were members.

Prescott, Arizona is the County seat for Yavapai County, the first Arizona County created by the Territorial Legislature. Prescott was the original Capital of Arizona until the Capital was moved to Tucson in 1867. In 1889, the Capital was moved again, this time to Phoenix. Prescott is located in the Bradshaw Mountains of central Arizona, at an altitude of 5400'. The town has a 4-season climate with relatively mild winters. Average annual precipitation is 19.32"; average snowfall is 25.4". Prescott is located at 34°34'6" North, 112°27'41" West (34.568210, -112.461482).

Flagstaff, Arizona is the County seat of Coconino County. Flagstaff lies near the southwestern edge of the Colorado Plateau and along the western side of the largest stand of ponderosa pine in the United States at an elevation around 7,000' (2,000 m). Humphreys Peak, an ancient volcano and the highest point in Arizona at 12,633' (3,850 m), is immediately north of Flagstaff in the Kachina peaks Wilderness of the San Francisco Peaks range. Old Route 66 (much of which is now Interstate 40) runs through Flagstaff between Barstow, California and the cities to the east and connects to the northern end of Interstate 17 which runs about a two and one-half hour drive south to end at Phoenix, Arizona. The town's name is mentioned in the lyrics to the song, "Route 66". Flagstaff is located at 35°11'57" North, 111°37'52" West (35.199160, -111.630991).

Sedona is a city and community that straddles the county line between Coconino and Yavapai Counties in the Verde Valley of northern Arizona. As of the 2000 census, the city had a total population of 10,192. Founded in 1902, it has become a gathering place for New Age adepts, who believe some of the rocks and pre-Columbian archaeological remains (such as rock dwellings) of the region have a mystical power. One of Sedona's main attractions is its stunning array of red sandstone formations, the Red Rocks of Sedona. The Red Rocks form a breathtaking backdrop for everything from New Age spiritual pursuits to the city's renowned Jazz on the Rocks festival. Politically, Uptown Sedona (the part in Coconino County) and West Sedona (the Yavapai County portion) form the City of Sedona. The town was incorporated into a city in January 1988. The Village of Oak Creek, despite its location seven miles to the south and outside Sedona city limits, is a significant part of the community. Sedona is located at 34°51'36" North, 111°47'21" West (34.859897, -111.789199).

The area was serviced by 3 TV stations, KNAZ-2 and KFPH-13 in Flagstaff and KAZT-30 in Prescott. Flagstaff had radio stations KAFF 930 AM, KAFF 92.9 FM, KBXZ 1650 AM, KFLX 105.1 FM, KJAK 1680 AM, KMGH 93.9 FM, KNAU 91.7 FM, KOLT 107.5 FM, KVNA 600 AM & 97.5 FM, KWMX 96.7 FM, KZGL 95.5 & 101.7 FM. Other stations serving the area included KQNA 1130 AM in Prescott Valley, KQST 102.9 FM in Cottonwood, KYET 1180 AM in Williams, and KSGC 92.1 FM in Grand Canyon Village. KJAK and several other stations were off the air. If you want the stations in the Prescott area, check the link.

Despite having about 30-40 radio stations from which they could normally receive signals in Sedona, they were lucky to get a dozen. Have you been through a disaster in a local community? Don't plan on getting much state or national news, even if it was available. What you usually got was the smaller local stations devoted 100% to local

matters like who is missing and who had been found, etc. and the large media outlets providing entertainment to take your mind off your problems.

Being in the Flagstaff area after WW III and having that city spared was an experience. If they hadn't gone to Phoenix and Buckeye to get Marty's guns and supplies, they wouldn't have had any idea of the scope of the devastation around the country. Many of the rural Arizona Counties were diverting the few survivors from Phoenix to the National Forests including Tonto National Forest, Apaches-Sitgreaves National Forest and Coconino National Forest. They were not getting any news out of Tucson other than learning that a missile had hit.

From Ham radio, they slowly pieced together a list of the cities that had been hit (see previous chapter). The total was 64 with some cities receiving multiple strikes. Many military installations were also hit and the Chinese had made an attempt at taking out some of the missile silos. Living anywhere in the area of active missile silos was definitely a bad idea. The list didn't really seem to make any sense, why hit Fresno or Bakersfield or Stockton, CA? Why had cities, like Salt Lake, been spared? Maybe those Mormon folks did have an in with God. As near as Mike and the others could tell, the Chinese had used old census data to identify the largest cities. In so doing, they had spared several large metropolitan areas and over concentrated on others. LA, for example had the stuffing kicked out of it, taking 5 warheads in the greater Los Angeles area including the Inland Empire.

Not that it made any difference; there was no logic to a nuclear war. Hitting military targets made perfect sense but the rest of it had to do with the old policy of Mutual Assured Destruction. From a strategic point of view, Flagstaff made one hell of a lot more sense than hitting Mesa. All Mesa had was a bunch of senior citizens. Destroying Flagstaff would have tied up a major artery in the southwestern US. With Tucson, Phoenix and Flagstaff destroyed, it would have been darned hard for anyone to cross the southwestern part of the country. It would have blocked I-40, I-10 and I-8, all 3 of the Interstate highways leading to California. Go figure.

The pundits who said that an ABM defense would prove to be worthless had been proven right. Maybe if the Star Wars thing had really happened, space borne lasers could have stopped the missiles. THAAD hadn't worked and the Patriot PAC-3 and Hawk missiles lacked the altitude range to effectively stop incoming warheads.

Guys and Dolls – Chapter 30 – Looking to the Future

“Where do we go from here?” Jack asked.

“I guess it’s time to give you the rest of Marty’s legacy,” Dr. Russell said. “Marty spent the last 2 years of his life pressing the Governor for that document and only got it signed 2 weeks before the Chinese attack.”

“What is it?” Mike asked.

“I don’t really know what you’d call it,” Russell said. “It is an extension to the Executive Order that made the *26 Men Organization* the acting Arizona State Defense Force. It has provisions that could only take place if a statewide disaster happened and the elected government of the state of Arizona was all killed off. Apparently, Marty figured that Prescott would definitely survive and that Flagstaff might survive. This document authorizes the formation of a temporary government and reformation of the Arizona Rangers. I talked to both Sheriff’s and I’m going to take the job of acting Governor until we can hold elections at some time in the future. Tom and Juan will actually staff the 2 Ranger offices we’re setting up. One office will be in Flagstaff and the other in Gila Bend. The state will be divided into north and south areas with Tom taking the Flagstaff office and Juan taking the Gila Bend office.

“The Barry M. Goldwater Range is the nation’s second largest tactical aviation range and has been essential for developing and maintaining the combat readiness of the tactical air forces of the US Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, and Army. Since the beginning of World War II, the Goldwater Range has contributed to the nation’s defense by effectively accommodating the training requirements of changing air combat capabilities and missions. The changing capabilities have been significant: military aircraft in World War II could shoot down enemy aircraft from a distance of about 600 feet, while today’s aircraft can engage and shoot down an enemy from as far as 25 miles.

“The Air Force has primary jurisdiction over the land and airspace of the Goldwater Range, administered through the 56th Fighter Wing Range Management Office at Luke AFB. Through a letter of agreement between the Air Force and Navy, the range was divided into two major training segments: the Gila Bend (eastern) segment, which is approximately 1,650,000 acres; and the Yuma (western) segment, which is approximately 1,017,000 acres. The airspace and lands of the Gila Bend segment are controlled by the Air Force; the Yuma segment is controlled by the US Marine Corps. A five-mile wide air and ground buffer zone transecting the Mohawk and Sierra Pinta mountains separates the two segments. That’s why we’re setting up the second office in Gila Bend,” Russell continued. “The Chinese didn’t hit Luke AFB and they didn’t hit several other military installations in Arizona. The military is starting a cleanup of the Phoenix and Tucson areas and we’re relocating a temporary state government to Flagstaff.

“The Arizona Rangers Act signed by Governor Jane Hull on April 30, 2002 has 2 provisions,” Russell continued.

Chapter 40 Arizona Rangers Article 1, General Provisions 41-4201, Arizona Rangers states:

The Arizona Rangers are an unpaid, noncommissioned civilian auxiliary that is available for the purposes of assistance to and support for law enforcement in this state. The Arizona Rangers do not possess any law enforcement or investigative powers that are not provided or established in law for all citizens of this state. Law enforcement support and assistance services are provided on the request of, and under the direction, control and supervision of, established law enforcement officials or officers.

Sec. 2. Purpose. The purpose of this act is to recognize the Arizona rangers, who formed in 1901, disbanded in 1909 and reestablished in 1957 by original Arizona Rangers. The present day Arizona Rangers are an unpaid, all volunteer, law enforcement support and assistance civilian auxiliary in this state. The present day Arizona Rangers provide youth support and community service and preserve the tradition, honor and history of the 1901-1909 Arizona Rangers. The Arizona Rangers, past and present, are a most valuable and important part of the historical heritage of dedicated, unselfish and honorable service to this state and the citizens of this state.

“This Executive Order suspends that provision and incorporates those volunteers into actual law enforcement as I see fit,” Russell concluded.

“Who were the 26 Men that made up the Organization?” Jack asked.

“Marty was the organizer,” Russell replied. “Add to that the 15 Arizona County Sheriffs. It also included the Governor, Lt. Governor, myself and 7 other people from Phoenix and Tucson. There are at least 2 companies of Arizona Rangers and they’re all volunteers who render assistance to law enforcement.”

“How can we help out?” Mike asked.

“Considering your age, health and other things, mostly be my advisers,” Russell replied. “This is 2014 and there really isn’t any point in moving back in time. We still have computers and all of the modern conveniences. My first priority will be to get the infrastructure back up and running. We’re going to need electricity, communications and things that I can’t even think of at the moment. I’ll know more once we get the Governor’s office open and we assess the needs of the citizens of Arizona.”

“What about things like fuel?” Jack asked.

“That could be a problem, so we’re going to need to inventory the fuel supply everywhere in Arizona,” Dr. Russell said. “How about making that your first project, fellas? You have the Hummer’s and a fuel trailer, why don’t the two of you start the inventory and keep in radio contact with your ham radios?”

“What if we run into trouble?” Jack asked.

“You have your M29s and you’ve proven to be resourceful so far,” Governor Russell replied. “I suppose I could make you Rangers, but just until you complete the assignment. The oldest Ranger they ever had was 55, if I recall, and you’re both well into your sixties.”

“Mike, why don’t you pull the fuel trailer and I’ll pull a horse trailer so if we get into rough country or run into some bad roads we can still get around?” Jack suggested.

“Can we go too?” Shelia asked. “We are younger and every bit as good with a gun as our husbands. We can cover their backs if they run into any trouble.”

“I suppose that you ladies want to be Rangers too,” Russell laughed.

“Only for the duration, Doc,” Ginger replied. “Besides, they’re going to need a medical person along with their advanced ages.”

“Oh, all right Ginger, I’ll get Jose and Maria and John and Char to go along and pull those camping trailers,” Governor Russell replied. “I’ll just make the 8 of you into your own Ranger Company. However, I don’t want you out there doing law enforcement work. You can defend yourselves, if necessary, but other than that, the badges are only to cover my behind, in case you do have to defend yourselves.”

“We’ll have to take Jim and Mary, too,” Jack said. “We’re going to need 2 horse trailers.”

By the time they had everything arranged, there were 10 of them and they drove a semi pulling a 15-horse trailer. The pickups and Hummers pulled 3 campers and a larger fuel trailer. They filled the back of one of the pickups with food and off they went, inventorying Arizona’s fuel supply. A company by the name of Featherlight made huge horse trailers and they had mounts for everyone and 5 packhorses or backup saddle horses. They were also armed to the teeth because they really didn’t know what to expect as they traveled around the state. Governor Russell named them *Temporary Company C* and laughed when he did it.

There really weren’t all that many fuel depots in Arizona. Two months later, they returned to Flagstaff, weary from being on the road. They hadn’t gone to every ranch, only to the cities. In the process they’d covered the entire state and had the information the Governor wanted. Large supplies of fuel had been destroyed in both Tucson and Phoenix. Tucson was as in bad a shape as the Phoenix area.

“You’re not going to like what we found, Governor Russell,” Mike reported. “Most of the communities that had fuel rationed it and have just about exhausted their supplies or had already exhausted their supplies. While we were at it we checked out the food situ-

ation. It isn't much better. It's going to be November next week; some of those communities are going to run out of food before winter is over."

"Did you run into any trouble?" Russell asked.

"Other than everyone being very protective of their community, no," Jack replied. "Let's face it, this is the desert southwest. Most of the people here in Arizona have independent minds and they don't really hold much with government. There are shortages of medicine and everything people need to get on. Restoring the power from that plant in Holbrook and Palo Verde helped. Losing the demands on the power from Phoenix and Tucson also helped. However, unless your office can do something to feed the people, we're surely going to have trouble."

"What's the mood of the people?" Russell asked.

"They haven't turned ugly, but they still had food when we went through," Mike answered.

"Right. Thank you for your efforts. I'm not really sure what we can do to supply additional food before the next summer's harvest. Temporary Company C is officially disbanded but you can keep the badges as souvenirs."

"Nah, we don't need them, Governor and if we had them without the authority that goes with them, it wouldn't feel right," Mike said handing back the 10 silver stars. "We'll go back to Sedona and be available if you need us."

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Tom and Juan had been covering the staggered auto barrier south on 179 before they left to run the Ranger offices. After they left, Jim and some of the others took over. Normally used to 34 people, they lost 2 to the Rangers and 10 to the project. Two more were gone most of the time, Governor Russell and his new wife. Basically they were stretched a little thin and the Coconino County Sheriff couldn't spare anyone to watch the barrier either. Sedona had problems of their own and they couldn't lend assistance.

"Man, am I ever glad to see you," John Jr. said. "Our defense has been thin lately. Have a good trip?"

"Didn't get shot at by anybody," his father answered. "Let's get the horses unloaded and fill me in."

"Where are Mike and Jack?" John asked.

"They stopped off in Flagstaff to give Governor Russell their report on what we found out," John Sr. answered.

“What did you find out, Dad?” Jr. asked.

“Son everyone is about out of fuel and most people don’t have enough food to get through this winter.”

“Where does that leave us?” Jr. asked. “We aren’t short of anything.”

“Hoping that no one finds out what we have and tries to take it,” his father answered.

“Dad, this has to be the smallest ranch in Arizona, there can’t be many people who even know it’s here,” Bob pointed out.

“Bob there are lots of people. You have most everyone in Sedona and they’re short of food; lots of people in Flagstaff worked on this ranch at one time or another and they’re short of food; plus Mike and Jack told a lot of people to look us up in Sedona someday,” John shook his head. “That happened before we realized how bad the food situation was. Why couldn’t they have made war earlier in the year so we had a full growing season?”

“Did you want an answer or was that rhetorical?” Bob ask.

“There’re the others from Flagstaff now,” John indicated.

“What did Russell say, fellas?” he asked when they got out of the Hummer’s.

“He said he didn’t really have an answer on the food problem and disbanded *Temporary Company C*,” Jack said.

“The kids have been run a little ragged managing the farm by themselves,” John pointed out.

“We’re back to 18 people full time now, so tell them we’ll handle the barrier tonight and they can get some rest,” Mike suggested. “Did they have any problems?”

“They didn’t say so, no,” John replied.

“Jack let’s grab some supper and take our turn at the barrier,” Mike proposed.

“No rest for the wicked, huh?” Jack laughed. “What’s our authority since we’re no long Rangers?”

“We’re still Arizona Defense Force,” Mike reminded him.

“Ok, but I rather be a Ranger,” Jack agreed.

“Ok kids, you’re relieved,” Jack told the 3 guarding the barrier. “Sitrep?”

“Nada, Dad,” John Jr. (Jack Jr.) replied.

“I wouldn’t mind it if Josh hooked up with Celia,” Jack said. “Jose and Maria are nice folks and their kids are all winners.”

“Tom and Teri (Teresa) get along well,” Mike agreed. “Did you remember the night vision goggles we took off that SAT guy?”

“Got ‘em right here,” Jack replied.

“Russell had better figure out something or we’re going to have trouble when the food starts running out,” Mike commented. “Jack, why don’t you catch 40 winks and I’ll wake you up around midnight?”

“Thanks, partner,” Jack said. Five minutes later he was sawing logs.

Mike kept an eye on the road and when it got dark, he used the 4th generation night vision to keep track of things. The binocular was an ATN Night Shadow 4 Night Vision Binocular with built in exclusive ATN Smart Technology. Those night vision glasses had a Proximity Sensor that automatically turned the night vision binoculars ON when it was brought in the viewing position. The Night Shadow 4 featured all of the benefits of US made Generation 4 technology, such as automatic brightness and gain control, bright light protection, along with a powerful IR illuminator and the Night Shadow 4 was a highly professional night vision device. Specialized multicoated optics provided extreme clarity in low-light situations. With 5X Magnification and designed for long ranges, it was an excellent choice for Law Enforcement.

The difference between generation 3 and generation 4 was that photocathode sensitivity measured in $\mu\text{A}/\text{lm}$. This criterion specified the number of electrons released by the Photocathode (PC). PC response was always measured in isolation with no amplification stage or ion barrier (film). Therefore, tube data sheets (which always carry this “raw” figure do not reflect the fact that over 50% of those electrons are lost in the ion barrier. While for most latest 3rd generation image intensifiers the photoresponse was in the 1800 $\mu\text{A}/\text{lm}$ (2000 $\mu\text{A}/\text{lm}$ for the latest Omni VI Pinnacle tubes), the actual number is more like 900 $\mu\text{A}/\text{lm}$. The 4th generation did not use ion barrier and while its “raw” photoresponse was the same as 3rd, the actual number is actually 100% higher. The binoculars used the ITT Tube Type F9800TF, a 4th generation tube.

“Wake up Jack, it’s midnight,” Mike said softly.

“Is there any coffee left?” Jack asked.

“I didn’t touch your half gallon,” Mike laughed. “Let me make a pit stop and you can wake me up at 4am.”

Other than some critters, Jack didn't see anything and Mike and he swapped places at 4am. John and Bob relieved them at 8am. Mike sort of got the short end of the deal, but his back was bothering him from all of the riding in the vehicles and he didn't have any trouble staying awake. Surgery can repair the back only so far and people who have had back problems usually have to live with a little discomfort. Perhaps the 2 best mattresses made were Serta and Sealy. Serta's were every bit as firm as the Sealy, but which one did motels use? Sealy for 2 reasons: cost and the fact that they lasted longer. If you've ever slept in a really cheap motel, you learned to really love a new Sealy mattress. It was mighty hard when you laid on it but when you woke up in the morning you'd had a good night's sleep. That was true for Sealy's too, for about 5 years. Motel mattresses aren't the same as residential mattress and the average person can't buy one of the commercial sets, unfortunately.

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Over breakfast, Mike visited with Ginger about several things. He asked her to rub Mineral Ice on his back and she became worried that his back was going out. It wasn't, it was just sore muscles from driving around for 2 months. During breakfast, they discussed the rule of three's, among other things.

"Russell is in trouble," Mike suggested.

"Do you mean the food?"

"Yes. How long would you say we have before it runs out for the people we talked to?"

"Maybe April," she replied.

"What's our situation?"

"Assuming we can grow food like we did last time, we should never run out of food. If we limit out travel, we have enough fuel to last several years. That's assuming that some MZB's don't show up and kill us all off."

"Bad things come in three's but we've had our three bad things," Mike remarked.

"How do you figure?" she asked.

"The Second Korean War, Yellowstone and now World War III."

"How do you figure the Second Korean War into the equation, Mike?" Ginger asked.

"Nothing bad happened to the country because of that little fiasco."

"Well then, make it Yellowstone, the Night of the Colonel's and World War III," he suggested.

“Maybe, but the Night of the Colonel’s, as you called it, came out of the Yellowstone thing. How about Yellowstone, World War III and one to go?”

“Are you always a pessimist?” Mike asked. “Haven’t we been through enough?”

“How far is it from Fresno to the Long Valley Caldera?” Ginger asked.

“I’d have to guess, but I think maybe 75-80 miles. Why?”

“What would the odds be that the nuclear weapon that hit Fresno disrupted the magma chamber at the caldera?” she asked.

“I’m not a geologist, honey, I have no idea,” Mike begged off. “We’re still washing down the occasional radioactive hot spot and you’re worried about another volcano?”

“Not worried, just wondering,” Ginger replied.

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Perhaps after experiencing a Supervolcano and a nuclear war, Ginger wasn’t the only person who was waiting for another shoe to drop. Remember the 2004 hurricane season down in Florida? They just couldn’t seem to stop coming and a new one came before they were completely cleaned up from the previous. What were the odds that the Long Valley caldera would erupt? Maybe the same as Yellowstone erupting and why did one have to be related to the other? They were separate pools of magma, weren’t they?

Where the hell was FEMA? Maybe they couldn’t handle a real disaster and all they were good for was locking up subversives. Kansas hadn’t been hit too hard in the nuclear attack and apparently they were growing some wheat, so why wasn’t FEMA distributing the food to the people who needed it? Surely there had to be millions of tons of grain stored to feed the livestock. Eating cornmeal beat the heck out of starving.

Governor Russell thought so and he sent a representative up to talk to the Governor of Kansas to work out some kind of deal to trade anything he could to get grain to feed his people. The capital of Kansas was Topeka and Topeka hadn’t been hit by any nuclear weapons. It was Kansas City, Missouri, not Kansas City, Kansas that the Chinese hit. The only city to be hit in Kansas had been Wichita. The agricultural outputs of the state of Kansas were: cattle, wheat, sorghum, soybeans, hogs and corn. The agricultural outputs of the state of Arizona were: citrus and cattle. The largest employer in Arizona had been the state government. And, they grew a lot of citrus in the Phoenix area. Russell narrowly averted the looming disaster but they used up most of their remaining fuel distributing the food.

Remember all the disaster movies made by Hollywood? The Wind (1928), San Francisco (1936), Hurricane (1937), Titanic (1943) (1953) (1958-as, An Affair to Remember) (1997), The High and The Mighty (1954), The Last Voyage (1960), Krakatoa, East of

Java (1969), Airport (1970) (1975) (1977) (1979), The Poseidon Adventure (1970) (1979), The Andromeda Strain (1971), Skyjacked (1972), The Crazies (1973), The Towering Inferno (1974), Earthquake (1974), Juggernaut (1974), The Hindenburg (1975), The Cassandra Crossing (1976), Two Minute Warning (1976), Rollercoaster (1977), Gray Lady Down (1978), The Swarm (1978), Avalanche (1978), Dawn of the Dead (1978), Meteor (1979), City on Fire (1979), When Time Ran Out (1980), St. Helens (1981), The Abyss (1985), Alive (1993), Apollo 13 (1995), Outbreak (1995), Virus (1995), Daylight (1996), Independence Day (1996), Twister (1996), Volcano (1997), Dante's Peak (1997), Armageddon (1998), Deep Impact (1998), Hard Rain (1998), The Perfect Storm (2000), The Core (2003) and The Day After Tomorrow (2004).

TV added a few, too: The Savage Bees (1976), Terror out of the Sky (1978), Crash (1978), S.O.S. Titanic (1979), Testament (1983), The Day After (1983), Starflight: The Plane That Couldn't Land (1983) and 10.5 (2004). The point is, if you don't like the disaster you have, you can always go rent a VHS or a DVD. And, there are others, like, The Devil at 4 O'Clock (1961), but you're getting the idea.

Of all the disaster movies, The Day After (1983), a graphic, disturbing film about the effects of a devastating nuclear holocaust on small-town residents of central Kansas, was perhaps the most frightening to many. One critic wrote of that film, "I first saw the film as a high school student attending a Department of Defense school in Germany in the early 1980's. The film was shown in school and it scared the bejeezus out of me and many of my fellow students. We were dealing with Red Army Faction terrorism, car bombs, bomb threats at school and only a few hundred miles from the border to East Germany. The concepts were quite accurate: if the eastern bloc came over the border, then the ONLY NATO response could be to fight a delayed retreat, blowing up roads and bridges as the US and NATO forces were pushed back and most of Germany would have fallen to the Eastern Bloc before any offensive action could have been taken. The scenario leading to the nuclear attacks is quite real and plausible."

So is any scenario where one of the participants has nothing to lose. Like, say, China with 300 inbound missiles. If you were the leader of China in Beijing and you had 300 inbound missiles, what would you do? Would you only retaliate or would you also attack the only two super powers in the world capable of taking advantage of your expected situation. If it were I, I'd take them with me, but that's only me. 300 missiles inbound to China would be more than enough to do a pretty effective job of wiping out the country. What are the US and Russia going to hit, anyway? Probably the same targets as India and Pakistan hit, assuming that they even bothered to retaliate.

One can conservatively figure that the US lost about ½ of its population in the attack and the aftermath. The US doesn't have a Civil Defense program because it wouldn't look right to the Russians remember? Instead of spending money on defenses that won't do any good in the first place, maybe the US ought to be spending the money on Civil Defense. We can't still be afraid of the Russians, can we? When you think about it, all the kids these days can do is Duck and Cover.

Cast of Named Characters at the ranch:

Mike and Ginger (2); Jack, Shelia, John, Jr., Kristen and Joshua (5); Jose, Maria and Celia (3); John and Char (2); Jim and Mary (2); Tom, Teresa and 3 kids (5); Juan, Sabrina and 3 kids (5); John and Mandy and their 2 kids (4); Bob and Patty and their 2 kids (4); and, Doc Russell and his wife, the nurse from Flagstaff, named Cindy (2).

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